

# 2025-2030 Strategic Plan





# “Deeper in Christ, Further into the World.”

## ✦ WHAT WE BELIEVE:

Jesus Christ is Lord of All and Savior of Sinners

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## ✦ OUR MISSION:

The mission of First Presbyterian Church is to be a loving, caring congregation which bases its faith and life on the Scriptures and seeks to help others become devoted followers of Christ through prayer, friendship, invitation, and witness.

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# 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

# CORE VALUES & CULTURE

*There are innumerable Christian virtues to be found in Scripture, and it is our fervent prayer that we continue to develop in all godliness as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification. For our purposes here, we have chosen to spotlight qualities that particularly speak to the culture of our church. These are not intended to replace any values already found in our mission statement, essentials of the faith, catechism, etc.*



## LOVING

*(Caring, Supporting, Praying, Compassionate)*

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).



## DEVOTED TO GOD'S TRUTH

*(Biblical, Studious, Pursuing Christ-likeness)*

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it” (Joshua 1:8).



## JOYFUL

*(Overflowing, Grateful, Attentive to God's Beauty, Full of Praise)*

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name (Psalm 100:4).



## FAITHFUL

*(Prayerful, Committed, Engaged, Dedicated)*

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23).



## GENEROUS

*(Giving, Hospitable, Thoughtful, Sharing)*

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share (1 Timothy 6:18).





# CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

We started this process by asking ourselves (through focus groups and surveys), “How are we doing?” “Are our members engaged?” “Are we on the right track?” “Are there gaps we might not be aware of?” Overwhelmingly, the results of that inquiry were positive.

With those positive results in mind, we have outlined the following important goals to aim for in our next phases of work.

- *Provide a path for the next generation to follow*
- *Address upcoming challenges and opportunities such as:*
  - Aging facilities
  - Expanding congregation in a land-locked location
  - Sale and proposed development of 7th Street lot used for Sunday morning parking
  - Pastoral, staff, and other leadership transitions
  - Busier congregants
  - Growing young family demographic
  - Culture increasingly hostile to the Church
  - Changing norms in technology and communication





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First Presbyterian Church (FPC) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, founded in 1827, is embarking on a transformative five-year strategic planning and capital campaign project to propel the church toward its goals of mission fidelity, involvement and connection, leadership, next generations, giving, missions, phasing in new senior leadership, and executing capital building projects.

First Presbyterian has a rich history in downtown Baton Rouge. FPC thrives on missions both locally and globally; serving their congregants, establishing city wide outreaches, and extending their reach to bring Christ to missions worldwide.

As part of the comprehensive strategic initiative, the church is seeking to phase in new senior leadership, ensuring a smooth transition and continued strong biblical teaching. The capital building projects will focus on renovating and enhancing the church's educational facilities, making them more efficient and aesthetically pleasing, and securing parking for current and future growth.

The project is guided by the church's motto, "Deeper in Christ, Further into the World," which reflects its commitment to spiritual growth and outreach. The strategic planning process will help the church align its resources and efforts with its mission and vision, ensuring that it remains a loving, caring congregation that bases its faith and life on the Scriptures.

The church's commitment to adapting to the needs of its growing congregation and the community is evident in these efforts laid out in the strategic plan. The scope of the five-year plan will serve as guidepost for the current leadership team as well as a guide for the next leadership team to take over.

The plan aims to integrate the 200-year historical significance of First Presbyterian Church along with its bright future; furthering participation and resources into a sustainable framework for worship, active mission, Christian formation, and a culture of Christ-like compassion. Key themes are engagement, stewardship, communication, leadership, forward thinking, and always being reformed according to God's Word to fulfill our motto, "Deeper in Christ, Further into the World."







# METHODOLOGY

As part of discovery & research, the following deep-dive analysis occurred in order to obtain a true picture of where things stand currently within the church. Personalized and moderator-guided meetings were hosted for elders, staff, and a small group of congregants. Additionally, a digital survey with 27 questions was deployed to the full list of congregation emails. This survey also featured open-ended questions enabling respondents to provide qualitative feedback in each area, where they felt necessary. A total of 540 congregants answered the survey and the summarization and recommended actions are listed below.





# STRATEGIC PLAN

## *At-a-Glance*

### **PRESS** Deeper in Christ

- Worship
- Pray
- Follow
- Care
- Proclaim

### **REACH** Further into the World

- Pray
- Partner
- Serve
- Empower

### **GROW** Generation to Generation

- Celebrate our history
- Disciple and develop the next generation
- Prepare for future transitions

### **INSPIRE** Through Excellent Infrastructure

- Develop a master facilities plan that accounts for parking, renovations, young family needs, and a growing congregation
- Upgrade and enhance technology

### **STEWARD** God's Economy

- Commit to being "all in" with time, talent, and tithes
- Give as an act of worship
- Improve efficiency and clarity
- Celebrate what God is doing

Communicate, Equip,  
Involve, and Send

Resource and Fund



# ESSENTIALS

*Press Deeper in Christ*

*“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne . . . Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen” (Revelation 7:10, 12).*

## WORSHIP

We exalt Jesus Christ through weekly robust worship that includes faithful and timely preaching of the Word.

### ✦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Consider worship of utmost importance, and therefore attending Sunday services faithfully and consistently
- Value excellence in our preaching and praise
- Focus our worship time on the person of Christ, not on announcements or platforms

### GOING FORWARD:

*Involve newer and younger members in worship participation and leadership*

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## PRAY

Our aim in prayer and spiritual formation is to make space for an encounter with the objective beauty of God that can change lives.

### ✦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Prioritize prayer in worship as well as our weekly group meetings (staff meetings, Bible studies, etc.)
- Recognize that God has not “wired” us all the same way, and therefore offer a wide variety of prayer opportunities for members
- Encourage the organic and natural prayer happening throughout our church body

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Gather groups who would intercede faithfully for specific topics of importance to the church or to society in general (i.e. pastoral transitions, new programs, missions, elections, education)*
- *Expand prayer structures that are newer to the congregation (i.e. experiential prayer, spiritual conferencing, retreats, concerts of prayer)*



## FOLLOW

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we seek to daily obey Christ's call to "follow me" by putting his teaching into practice in the context of community.

### ♦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Treasure God's Word and study it fervently in all ages and stages of life through robust Sunday school classes, Bible studies, youth groups, community groups, theology conferences, etc.
- Create opportunities for fellowship through community groups that grow in Christian maturity together

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Expand participation in community groups by*
    - *Enhancing our support and training for our leaders*
    - *Raising up new leaders who would lead new groups*
    - *Establishing a library of vetted and accessible content for groups*
  - *Make groups easy to join, especially for newer members*
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## CARE

We demonstrate God's love to the world as we love one another and intentionally walk together through all the seasons of life.

### ♦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Reach out to those who are homebound, bereaved, or simply lonely and in need of more connection
- Care for those in all kinds of need through ministries such as the Baton Rouge Christian Counseling Center, GriefShare, meal ministry, spiritual direction, or pastoral counseling

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Expand the "care" dimension of our community and fellowship groups*
  - *Look for opportunities to connect members across three different services*
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## PROCLAIM

We steadfastly proclaim the truth of God's word.

### ♦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Source our worship and ministry in the deep stream of historic Christian orthodoxy and the Reformed faith
- Live from essentials of our faith, thereby gathering believers from a variety of traditions
- Affirm our faith in worship

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Charge the session with evaluating our mission fidelity annually*
- *Establish intentional, regular teaching programs on essentials to new Christians and young members*



# ESSENTIALS

*Reach Further into the World*

God calls us to be ambassador-servants. Like Jesus, the King of kings who made himself a servant, he calls us to serve as we carry the King's message to—and make disciples of—those in our city and throughout the world.

## CITY MINISTRY:

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you” (Jeremiah 29:7).



We start here. The best we can do for our city is to connect its people to the Giver of Life. It's eternal life that is most precious, but with the gift of eternal life comes the Holy Spirit, who lives inside of us and begins to rightly connect us with the community around us.

The physical needs in our city, and every city, are endless (“For you will always have the poor with you . . .” Matthew 26:11). God commands us to engage these needs, wisely applying the resources he gives us to steward toward the welfare of the city of Baton Rouge. Wisdom for this comes through prayer, so seeing to the welfare of our city starts with prayer. “What is your will for us in this today, Lord?”

He has called us to engage with schools who serve at-risk youth, and this requires patient and loving support. He has called us to serve those in prison, which requires visit after visit after visit to show unconditional love. He has called us to serve the unborn, which requires steadfast love. He has called us to serve the homeless, which requires us to be ready for immediate action, but also to help

provide resources to escape homelessness. He calls us to engage the unmet spiritual needs of our community, which requires long term commitments of time and resources, such as the work on the new Sanctuary church plant. And on. And on.

## GLOBAL MISSIONS:

“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15).

God has called us to steward his resources to support missionaries and ministries on the field, and has called us to go ourselves, when the time is right, to bring the Good News and make disciples.

We have many wonderful opportunities to support short-term works, and we should embrace those God calls us to. Engagement with short-term works have started many on a lifelong commitment to global missions. And, because of the character of our church, God has blessed us with the capacity to commit to works that take years to complete—which we know from experience pay off eternally.

He has called us to support Christian education that trains young people to follow Christ with all their hearts. This takes years of steady commitment to build facilities and see children progress. He has called us to unreached people. This takes a commitment of time on the part of missionaries to learn the language and culture to point where they can communicate the Good News. He has called us to lasting good works that show God’s love by giving care to the vulnerable. This takes years of steady building of facilities and programs, such as those for unwed mothers, or the elderly, or orphans, gaining the trust of communities and governments who may be skeptical of motives. And all long-term overseas mission takes commitment on our part to the individual workers spiritually, emotionally, and financially.

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Whether local or global, to reach further into the world means we **pray, partner** with other gospel-focused ministries and missionaries, **serve** through the strength God supplies, and **empower** our partners to fulfill their calling.

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# ESSENTIALS

*Reach Further into the World*

## PRAY

### ◆ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Pray regularly for our ministry partners in worship services
- Commit to pray fervently for those God has called us to support

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Pray regularly for the welfare of our city to ensure that we, as his ambassadors, go where he wants us to go and do what he wants us to do*
  - *Regularly share stories and updates about FPC missions to encourage and inspire prayer teams*
  - *Pray for the direction and leadership of missions ministry as we prepare for the mission pastor's retirement*
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## PARTNER

### ◆ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Evaluate partnerships to assess if they are:
  - Gospel-centric and consistent with what God has called us to support
  - Connected to an organization that can supply adequate support and oversight to foster sustainability
  - Connected to the FPC body of believers
- Share our local and global commitments with the congregation on a regular basis
- Periodically invite partners to share how God is working in their area (with great sensitivity to those in places for whom publicity would be harmful)

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Seek out opportunities to partner with other bodies of believers to make best use of God's provision and so the world will see the church united in labor and love*
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## SERVE

### ♦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Participate as an active member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, both in our regional presbytery and in the larger denomination
- Communicate on a regular basis how individuals and families can participate in local and global missions

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Investigate and assess various media of communication for sharing service opportunities*
- *Expand opportunities for families and youth to serve*
- *Effectively communicate through various media the significant impact of the missions supported by FPC*
- *Offer training and resources to equip volunteers for effective ministry*
- *Endeavor to develop true heart relationships with Christians in the nations where our missionary partners labor, for the glory of God and the sustaining of the ministry longterm*
- *Clearly outline service opportunities online*
- *Empower our congregation to serve in the mission field of life*

## EMPOWER

### ♦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Preferentially support ministries that specifically train nationals to carry on the work, as this builds self-sustaining, self-replicating works that last
- Recognize that God's place for us is often in works that require longer term commitments—while any given act of service may take only a short time, the projects of which they are a part can take years to complete

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Intentionally connect deeply with each ministry and missionary to know*
  - *What God has called them to do*
  - *How that mission is progressing*
  - *What needs they have spiritually, emotionally, and physically*
  - *How they are supported (in all dimensions) by their sending agencies*





# CULTIVATE

*Grow Generation to Generation*

*So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation (Psalm 71:18).*

First Presbyterian Church is ever ancient and ever fresh; both rooted and reaching.

## CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY

### ◆ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Continue to stand as a multi-generational church, that cares for each other from cradle to grave
- Identify natural opportunities for one generation to connect with another (Sunday schools, men's and women's fellowship gatherings, etc.)

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Celebrate, archive, and memorialize FPC history, consistency, and fingerprint on the city over time*
  - *Celebrate the 200th anniversary of the church through a variety of creative expressions of our history, leading toward a church-wide bicentennial celebration*
  - *Record and celebrate the faith stories of our long-time members*
  - *Consider documenting testimonies of our ministry partners and seminarians regarding their FPC partnership*

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## DISCIPLE AND DEVELOP THE NEXT GENERATION

### ◆ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Outline opportunities for the congregation to serve in the Stewarding God's Grace catalog
- Continue to prioritize and foster training, education, and mentorship opportunities of younger generation staff and pastors
- Continue to identify younger leaders to serve as deacons and elders
- Continue to leverage the wisdom of our senior saints

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Identify leadership positions and opportunities (community group leaders, Sunday school teachers, other training, etc.) for younger generation members*



- *Develop a multi-generational discipleship and mentor program*
- *Expand ministry opportunities and outreach development among college-aged and young adults*
  - *Consider a “task force” approach instead of ongoing committees*
  - *Find ways to engage younger leaders more visibly in worship*
- *Refine and communicate to the congregation the process and qualifications for becoming a deacon or elder*
- *Test and evaluate a smaller-sized session*

## PREPARE FOR FUTURE TRANSITIONS

### ◆ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Identify key staff and pastoral transitions to take place within the next one to two years

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Establish small, confidential prayer teams to pray faithfully through major transitions*
- *Engage a process of seamless senior pastor transition by electing a search committee with which Gerrit participates, including overlapping with the new pastor for four to seven months*
- *Develop an ad hoc group to consider current and projected pastoral needs as long-term pastors enter retirement*
- *Develop a generalized process for staff-level (non-pastoral) transitions, in terms of who's involved, approval process, knowledge transfer, etc.*





# CULTIVATE

*Inspire through Excellent Infrastructure*

*How lovely is your dwelling place . . . my soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord . . . Even the sparrow finds a home . . . at your altars (Psalm 84:1-3).*

The church is not a building or facility, but the people in it. However, the building and facilities provide the vehicle where we gather and enact our motto—Deeper in Christ and Further into the World. We display God’s beauty to the world and provide a place where we gather to worship, teach, and commune. Our campus, church buildings, systems, and technology should be an asset to our mission—beautiful and efficient, useful and usable, warm and inviting, accessible, and always pointing to the beauty of Christ.

## DEVELOP A MASTER CAMPUS PLAN FOR:

### NEEDS OF YOUNG FAMILIES

- Evaluate and adjust the flow and layout of the So Loved & Mother’s Day Out wing of the campus to ensure it meets our needs, including elevator access, kitchen, gym, and 8th Street entrance
- Evaluate the childhood and youth spaces in light of the needs and goals of those growing ministries. Consider relocating ministry partners or moving the youth out of the basement if space is available.
- Consider extending the 8th Street entrance lobby to the elevator and pushing our Mother’s Day Out Director office into a portion of our current kitchen space. This expanded lobby and reception area with seating could provide opportunities for our young families to connect and create a welcoming first impression when people come to this portion of our church.
- Evaluate the campus for security considerations, especially in areas where children are gathering

### RENOVATIONS

We need to update our existing common areas so they are accessible, clean, and inviting. Considerations include:

- Refurbishment of restrooms in the Sanctuary and Education Buildings with new tile, fixtures, counter tops, lights, and flooring
- Update and modernizing the library
- Remodel office spaces to accommodate increased number of staff positions
- Evaluate the kitchen and food preparation areas of the campus to ensure they are right-sized, up to date, and useful for future needs
- Evaluate and update the sizes of our classrooms and other meeting spaces

- Consider building access and overall traffic flow, as well as, assess ADA recommendations in order to meet the needs of older members
- Identify other aging elements of the historic campus that will need significant repair or replacement

## GROWING CONGREGATION

- Identify property around the campus for purchase. Use cases for the property include:
  - Parking
  - Relocate and expand housed ministry partners
  - Expand on-site missions (college ministry, city and global mission center, homeless outreach)
  - Partnership with a seminary to provide degree-level classes for seminarians, pastoral interns, elders and staff (from FPC, its church plants, and other area churches) and other interested members

## PARKING

- Identify and secure additional parking for Sunday mornings
- Consider securing an option or right of first refusal on the Old Governor's Mansion parking lot.
- Create highly-visible temporary signage to put up on Sunday mornings

## EVALUATE, UPGRADE AND ENHANCE TECHNOLOGY

- Provide the congregation with convenient, accessible, and easy-to-use giving options. Options to give must both include historic methods such as cash or check as well as giving online, mobile, QR code, etc. Evaluate services such as Pushpay or Tithe.ly (among others).
- Define requirements and upgrade our website, including modernizing the technology as well as identifying and prioritizing the most relevant, requested content for users
- Evaluate our requirements for comprehensive church management and communication systems. Decide if the current systems in place can meet our needs or if upgrades are required.
- Provide technology to support Sunday schools, Bible studies, and other groups including recording equipment, streaming technologies, video conferencing, etc.







# CULTIVATE

## *Steward God's Economy*

*“Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48).*

Jesus says in Matthew 6, “when you give” not, “if you give.” He says, “we ought to give for the glory of God and the good of his people.” Our giving is to the Lord and seen by the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 16 Paul says that giving is “an act of worship.”

Many Christians argue about whether the tithe (10% of our income) is still the standard for our giving to the Church. Paul scuttles the whole debate in one verse. He says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich,” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Christ’s self-giving is now the standard for our giving! We begin from the base of the tithe and aim for emulation of his self-sacrifice.

Moreover, we recognize that in God’s economy we have a need to sacrificially give not only of our monetary wealth but also of our time and our spiritual gifts. This practice of being “all in” is a key part of how we go deeper in Christ, and further into the world.

## COMMIT TO BEING “ALL IN” WITH TIME, TALENT, AND TITHES

### ✦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Focus on intentional, regular giving to the church that supports every aspect of the ministry and mission rather than a host of special, a la carte giving requests
- Continue the “Stewarding God’s Grace” approach to the stewardship season, with a focus on giving not just your money but also your spiritual gifts and time

### GOING FORWARD:

*Communicate clearly and often the extent to which members are personally investing their time and talents in local and global ministry*

## GIVE AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

### ✦ WHAT WE ALREADY DO:

- Continue to encourage giving through the principles of an abundance mentality, and giving as an expression of our participation in the body of Christ

### GOING FORWARD:

*Preach more often on the Biblical principle of “the need of the follower of Christ to give” of themselves and their resources in Christ’s service and the proclamation of the gospel*

## IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND CLARITY

### GOING FORWARD:

- *Improve the efficiency and means by which we enable our members to give financially. Look for opportunities to improve efficiency in ministry operations and programs without sacrificing quality.*
- *Communicate clearly and often how our tithes and offerings provide the means by which we do local and global ministry*
- *Improve two-way communication between church staff and our members regarding church finances*
- *Evaluate the metrics used to steward church giving, and report as appropriate. Key metrics such as total giving, number of givers, average gift size, and percentage of the budget covered by tithes can help the congregation see the impact of their giving.*

## CELEBRATE WHAT GOD IS DOING

### GOING FORWARD:

*Celebrate via testimony and examples of life change through the many missions and ministries we support financially and into which we invest time and talents.*





# SUPPORT

*Communicate, Equip, Involve, and Send*



## GOING FORWARD:

- *Evaluate current communication approaches for effectiveness. Much of the information we provide is not being consumed or retained. Consider different strategies, methodologies, and technology.*
- *Expand our onboarding process for new members to help them feel welcomed, connected, and informed. Consider adding:*
  - *Longer-term relationship with a “mentor” or other current member*
  - *Introduction into a community group*
  - *Introduction into a mission or service opportunity*
  - *Joining an email journey that includes 6 months of emails with various layers and levels of information to fully-orientate new members to important information*
- *Look for opportunities to simplify and focus our attention where possible. Assess new and current programs for alignment and fit with the motto, “Deeper in Christ and Further into the World.”*
- *Foster a culture of invitation and hospitality where members feel empowered to invite friends, family, and acquaintances to attend church events and services*
- *Provide training and resources to help members effectively share their faith with others*
- *Develop quarterly targeted mission opportunities to engage younger generations and encourage their participation in the church*
- *Celebrate and encourage instances of remarkable service, dedication, or projects through newsletter articles, social media posts, videos, etc. Make sure to highlight a wide range of people and activities over time.*
- *Provide a central location online for members to see and sign up for current service opportunities*
- *Update and upgrade the church’s central calendar*
- *Enhance the digital directory to be more user-friendly*





# SUPPORT

*Resource and Fund*

## GOING FORWARD:

- *Fund the annual budget for maintenance and repairs at sufficient levels to maintain excellent facilities.*
- *Create a sustainable maintenance schedule based on budget.*
- *Hire an architecture and design firm to evaluate our campus needs. Develop a master campus plan for renovations and upgrades.*
- *Identify a committee and chair for a capital campaign. Develop a detailed campaign plan to support the needs outlined in the strategic plan and master campus plan.*

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