

VISION

2020

WE ARE THE CHURCH



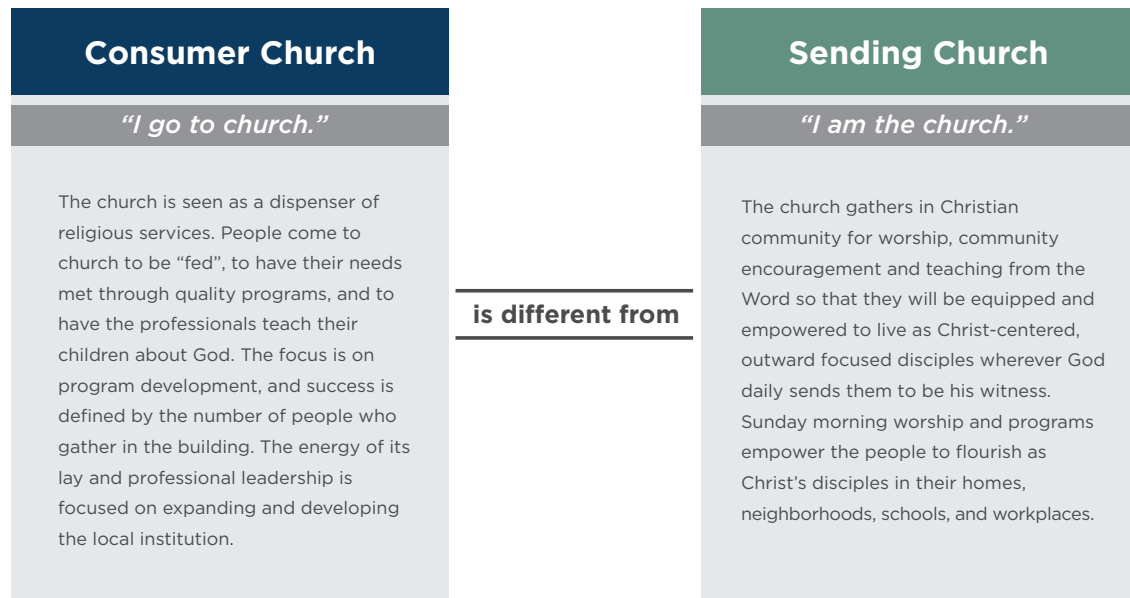
First Presbyterian Church, Houston

The Critical Question...

What type of church are we going to be?

“Compelled by the love of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we carry the gospel to Houston and the world” is the mission statement of First Presbyterian Church, Houston. This report proposes a vision, “Vision 2020,” of how best our church can live into this mission.

In order for us to fully embrace this mission statement, it is necessary to make a commitment regarding the type of church we are going to be. In the past we have had two different ministry models at work in our church, and we have existed on a continuum somewhere between the two (see below). “I go to church” could be described as consumer, attractional or institutional. “I am the church” could be expressed as sending, missional or kingdom-focused. We believe that if First Presbyterian Church is going to “carry the gospel to Houston and the world” we will need to make an intentional, significant shift in emphasis to the latter model.



Therefore, we are moving forward with a bold vision statement that is focused on winning hearts for Christ. To live into our mission statement successfully, we believe change is necessary and that a shift in our ministry philosophy can help ignite us in carrying the gospel to Houston and the world. In this summary report you will see: our vision statement, a narrative description of our vision, a visual illustration of our vision, key ministry initiatives, and key infrastructure initiatives.

Vision Statement

Our Mission

Compelled by the love of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we carry the gospel to Houston and to the world.

Our Vision

We are a gospel-centered church seeking to encourage, equip, empower and deploy outwardly-focused disciples who desire to share the good news of Jesus Christ wherever God sends them.

We Do That As We:

Gather together to worship, pray, learn, encourage, and celebrate;

Grow into maturity as followers of Jesus Christ through biblical teaching and small group studies;

Go into the world to share the gospel as individuals in our circles of influence and as a body in Houston and beyond.

We are praying for a harvest of 10,000 new decisions for Jesus Christ in Houston and around the world. Our dream is that over the next 10 years FPC will equip 100% of our membership to minister in their circles of influence, plant 10 new churches, equip and send 100 church planters, leaders and missionaries to transform their communities, and invest \$10 million in new funding for new church plants and support new and existing local and global mission opportunities.

Key Strategic Initiatives

Prayer

Culture Shift

Ministry Structures and Strategy

Strategic Ministry Teams

Strategic Disciple-Making Ministries

Partnership with Presbyterian School

Communications

Facilities

1 “Church planting” is a multifaceted term that goes beyond merely franchising or planting miniature FPCs. It is not about planting a church in a neighborhood; rather its focus is on planting the Church. Whether it is in a grand sanctuary, a home, a boardroom, or a park, the Church is the covenant people of God, created and sustained by the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of carrying the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost. As grass roots movements of the gospel, they will reflect their context - the Third Ward, the Heights, a coffee shop in Midtown, a golf club in Sugarland, a downtown breakfast cafe on a weekday morning etc. They will need different resources and have different make-ups, but they will all be intentional expressions of the gospel in a particular community.”

Vision Narrative

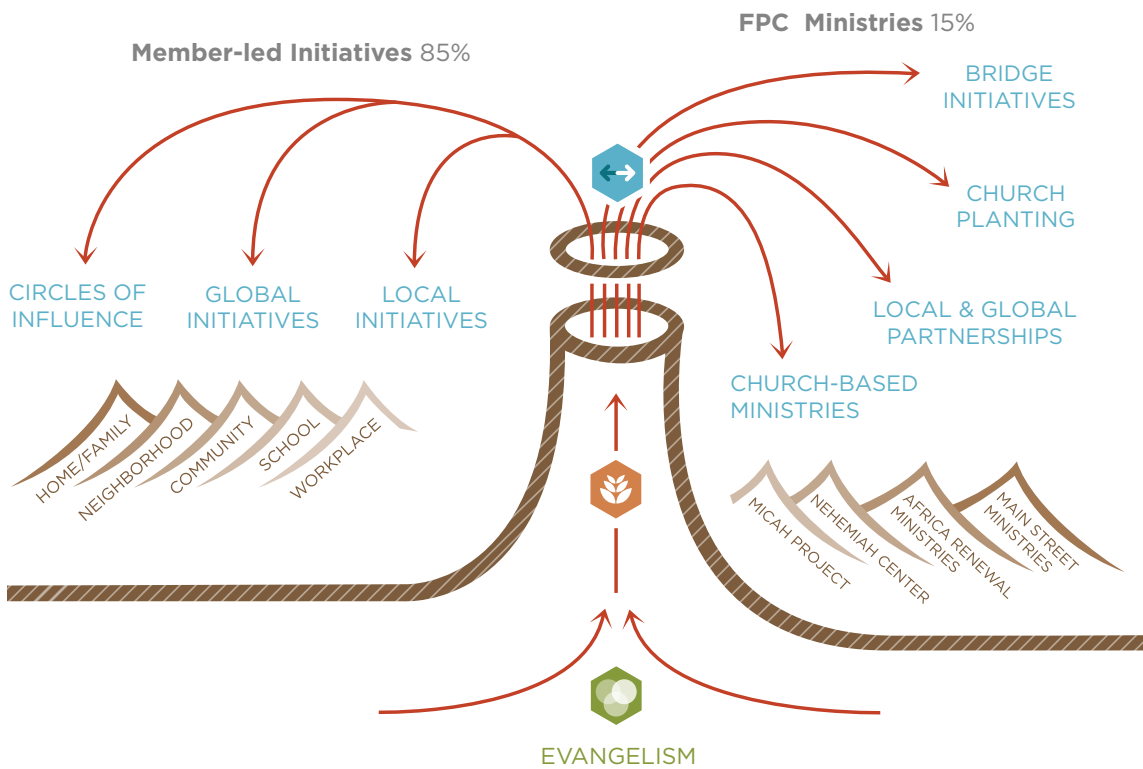
We envision First Presbyterian Church, Houston as a church that **carries the gospel to Houston and to the world**. As a church body and as individuals, we are compelled to “show and tell” the good news of Christ by the way we live and by what we say. Our mission is to share Christ’s powerful message of grace and hope joyfully with people in our circles of influence. This is a God-sized vision that requires God-sized resources. Therefore we will seek to ground everything we do in prayer as our first task of grace and trust in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

In order to do that we will need to recognize our unique gifts and surrender them to Jesus for his kingdom work. We will support and serve alongside our mission partners here in Houston and around the world, and we will also strive to apply our distinctive entrepreneurial and innovative talents to creating and adapting disciple-making ministries in the community. As God gives individuals and groups within FPC visions for gospel-centered ministry in the community, the **Ministry Empowerment Team** will come alongside them and help turn their vision into reality. Similarly, the **Church Planting Strategy Team** will work to prepare our congregation to plant the next generation of churches in Houston, providing the theological and philosophical foundation for being a church that multiplies.

God placed this church at the crossroads of cultures, strategically located in the heart of Houston, a world-class city, whose influence extends around the globe. Our immediate neighborhood is a global mission field! We are awestruck and humbled by the far-reaching potential of our efforts to love our neighbors, specifically surrounding communities like the Museum District, Montrose, Rice University, and the Texas Medical Center. Over the next decade we will prioritize building gospel-centered bridges into those communities, carrying the Good News of Jesus Christ to them in word and deed. This will require the efforts of dedicated members serving on **Bridge Teams**, the hospitality of our campus, and the investment of our resources.

In worship we will embrace our role as the priesthood of believers, focusing ourselves on God’s glory and on his Word, lifting up the concerns of our community before him, and seeking to be sent out as his witnesses. As fellow disciples we will mentor, challenge, and exhort one another so that each of us as individuals and families will engage as followers of Christ in our unique circles of influence – specifically, our homes, neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. Every member of our church, from the four-year-olds to the Fellowship Class, will be equipped and empowered to live as Christ-centered, outward-focused disciples wherever God daily sends them to be his witness.

**Our Vision:
To Be A Sending Church**



Member-led Initiatives = Ministries initiated by individuals operating out of their passion and/or in their circle of influence.

FPC Ministries = time ministry partners or new strategic initiatives that receive significant funding from FPC.

Circles of Influence = Places where the Lord has already given us the ability to share the gospel. Our homes, our neighborhoods, etc.

Church-Based Ministries = Ministries (such as Children & Families, Senior Adults, etc.) that exist to equip, disciple and serve the congregation.

Bridge Initiatives = See “Ministry Initiatives #5” (Page 8)

Church Planting = See “Ministry Initiatives #4” (Page 7)

 = Gather
 = Grow
 = Go

Ministry Initiatives

Strategic Thrust

Activate FPC members as Christ-centered, outwardly-focused disciples by nurturing a culture that empowers, equips, and sends them out into the community to live in mission.

1. Prayer

In order to engage in the church's mission, prioritize prayer as a central discipline in worship, discipleship, and mission. Prayer is the primary act of gratitude to which God calls us. Ongoing ministries such as PrayFirst, monthly prayer gatherings on Wednesday nights, prayer partners on Sunday mornings, and the daily Prayer Chain should be given greater visibility and consistent resources.

2. Culture Shift

Formulate a two-year plan to commit the leadership and the congregation to the task of shifting to a missional culture and adopting the Sending Church model.

- Create a shared theology, common language and unifying commitment through sermons, Bible studies, small groups resources, and the intentional integration of discipleship and outreach ministries
- Include the creative incorporation of a report from the "mission fields" described in "Initiative 3: Ministry Structure and Strategy" into every worship service every Sunday. These will be tangible examples of what it means to be the Church in the community. They will reinforce the idea that we are all missionaries, and we should view our circles of influence as the mission field: our homes, our offices, our schools, our neighborhoods and everywhere else we spend our days.

3. Ministry Structure and Strategy

In order to carry the gospel to Houston and the world, adopt an equipping model of discipleship. This would call for a reorganization of the staff and committee structure with a unified focus on preparing members to be missionaries in their communities/circles of influence, specifically in the places where congregation members spend most of their time:

- Home/Office/Workplace/School
- Neighborhood, Community, World

This initiative is intended to reinforce the idea that everything we do should be used to achieve our "mission" as articulated in our Mission Statement. This will encourage the integration of Bible study, theology, ministry and evangelism, not just inside our church building but wherever our members find themselves during the week. Staff and ministry team members should be aware of how they are contributing to our mission and should be able to articulate it. This will help us focus on consistent priorities across the organization.

► First Steps...

Recently, FPC began a formal partnership with **Lead Them Home Ministries**, a Boston-based ministry that specializes in effective outreach and pastoral care to LGBT persons and to those who experience same-sex attraction as a struggle in their lives. A biblically orthodox ministry, LTH mobilizes church leaders and the wider evangelical community to cultivate faith identity among persons of non-heterosexual orientation and gender identity. As we go forward into 2014, Lead Them Home will provide Posture Shift training for staff, elders and lay leaders in order to help us reach out into the LGBT community in a manner that balances an orthodox understanding of Scripture with the all-inclusive love of Jesus Christ. We also hope to partner with LTH to offer a Family Care seminar to heal relationships between conservative-faith family members and LGBT loved ones and – eventually – to work with LGBT leaders in Houston to work to eliminate anti-gay bullying and prevent gay teen suicide. We plan to multiply these efforts across the city of Houston by inviting other evangelical church leaders to learn with us and join us in our efforts.

Additional ideas on how we could accomplish this include:

- Clearly and intentionally link every staff and volunteer role in the church to carrying the gospel to Houston and the world.
- Encourage ministry staff to be out in the community, in homes, etc. rather than spending their days inside the church building
- Every member of the staff can be assigned a local or global ministry partner to incorporate into what they are doing

4. Disciple-Making Ministries

Engage the entrepreneurial, influential, community-oriented aspects of our membership in disciple-making ministries in the community, giving primary attention to culturally relevant models for church planting and the creation of new ministries in the community. “Church planting” is a multifaceted term that goes beyond merely franchising or planting miniature FPCs. It is not about planting a church in a neighborhood; rather its focus is on planting the Church.

- Form a Church Planting Strategy Team with the sole task of researching church planting and forming a strategy for FPC to plant churches.
- Begin reallocating financial resources to plant churches and seed ministries in the community. The majority of the 10 church plants will probably be established in the final five years of the 10-year period, but we need to begin preparing ourselves financially now.
- Establish a theology and ministry philosophy to guide our church planting efforts.
- Form the Ministry Empowerment Team (M.E.T.) to mentor individuals and groups to whom God has given a vision for ministry in the community.

► First Steps...

FPC has helped facilitate the creation of a city-wide, cross-denominational, Christ-centered church planting residency that will identify, train, and deploy church planters throughout the greater Houston area. This endeavor has been in partnership with leaders from a variety of denominations and networks including but not limited to Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Evangelical Free, and Acts 29. This group of network leaders will partner under the banner of the Houston Church Planting Network to resource and train the future leaders of the church in our city. It is our anticipation that together we will begin planting 8-12 churches a year in 2015. This has been a stunning development that we pray will result in the whole church reaching the whole city with the whole gospel.

5. Strategic Ministry Teams

The session will create strategic ministry teams to reach out to our most immediate mission fields. For example, the Museum District, Medical Center, Rice University, Montrose etc. Borrowing language used in the Vision 2020 meetings, these could be called “Bridge Teams” or “Community Bridge Teams” because we are seeking to build bridges into those communities. (For example, the vision for the Presbyterian School Bridge Team would be: “To build a gospel-centered bridge to the Presbyterian School community.” For the Museum District Bridge Team: “To build a gospel-centered bridge to the Museum community.”)

► First Steps...

While initiatives 2 & 3 will take much prayer, time and conversation - committees of Session are already beginning to wrestle with the kinds of “key questions” that will allow them to adapt to our new vision. Recently the Missions Committee met and began to talk and pray through how Vision 2020 might affect that committee.

Questions included:

- How Vision 2020 affects the Missions Ministry at FPC?
- If the whole church becomes the “Missions Ministry” then what does that mean for the current Missions department?
- How will we need to change? What might we need to add or subtract?
- What are some potential barriers to implementing Vision 2020?
- What is our most important next step?

6. Partnership with Presbyterian School

Invest in the strengthening the relationship between the church and the Presbyterian School (PS).

- Create a ministry team to focus on this vital relationship.
- Items that could be included:
 - Intentional ministry to the school's faculty and families
 - Partnership in local mission projects
 - Connecting PS/FPC with international churches who also have schools like Hatfield Christian Church or Gaba Community Church.
 - Joint worship services (e.g. FPC staff joining PS chapel for a special occasion)
 - Integrating PS and FPC in facility decisions
 - "Shared space" for the PS strategic vision team to add initiatives or goals to those of the FPC strategic vision team.

Key Infrastructure Initiatives

Communications

Strategic Thrust: Communicate more effectively to create community, develop disciples, and carry the gospel.

1. Improved the FPC website in order to be more compelling, current, informative and inspirational

- Accurate and current information with words, pictures, sound, and design that connects with members and non-members.
- Emphasis on prayer with prayer-request portal on website and social media, stories of answered prayer, and prayer-related Scriptures, articles and art
- Audio and video gospel content online that teaches and promotes discipleship (e.g. short videos for pastor's testimony and illustrations of sermon series)
- Robust social media participation by pastors and staff
- Video, audio and PDF of sermons (archived and streaming live) and selected SS teaching (Perhaps include music from worship services and other sources as background or separate files.)
- Links to mission partners, church plants, Presbyterian School, and other related sites

2. Identify and acquire tools that enable effective communication

- IT platform that supports streaming video, blogs, message boards, and social media
- Equipment that supports website, e.g. cameras, lighting, sound boards
- Facilities (Sanctuary, Grand Hall, etc.) upgrades to enhance media and sound

3. Build a leadership team, structure, and process that coordinates and executes the overall strategy

► First Steps...

The Communications Team has been working on a new website since Aug 2013. A two day strategy meeting with staff helped establish goals, function and look. We are excited to announce the new website will be launched Feb 2014.

Facilities and Campus:

Strategic Thrust: As good stewards, maintain and adapt the FPC campus to undergird and support the mission of FPC, identifying innovative ways to capitalize on our facilities and unique location to carry the gospel to Houston and the world.

1. Maintain the existing facility and property – the facility must be functional and cannot be allowed to deteriorate. In order to guarantee its preservation and usability, FPC must continue to develop and manage crucial funding resources: operating budget, building endowment and future capital campaigns.

2. Develop a campus master plan that enables FPC to further its mission:

- Prioritize the facility resources to support Vision 2020 ministry initiatives.
- Partner with Presbyterian School to review ongoing needs and future expansion.
- Collaborate with the Museum of Fine Arts Houston during its expansion on areas of common interest.
- Consider the acquisition of strategic properties to the north of the campus.

The Vision 2020 Committee was formed by the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Houston in the fall of 2012 and charged with this assignment:

“Building on Vision 2013,
how do we live into our mission statement?”

Vision 2020 Team

Co Chairs: Chris Athon & Chris Herbold

Team Members: Jim Birchfield, Mark Carleton, Sabrina Espinoza, Scot Luther, Marilyn McDonald, Susan Miclette, Cody Nath, Fred Robertson, Lija Shah, Andrew Stepp

Recording Secretary: Kay Bones

Consultant: Don Short



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