

First Presbyterian Church of Houston

SENIOR PASTOR OPPORTUNITY PROFILE



Approved by the Session of FPC Houston
October 19, 2021

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement of First Presbyterian Church of Houston as stated on our website at fpchouston.org/about/our-beliefs/:

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

Compelled by the love of Jesus Christ

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.”

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 5:4

“So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present”

We carry the Gospel

1 Thessalonians 2:8

“Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well”.

To Houston

Acts 2:46-47

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

To the World

Matthew 28:18-20

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

STATEMENT OF FAITH

First Presbyterian Church of Houston is affiliated with A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) (www.eco-pres.org.) This means that our theology is Reformed as expressed in ECO's Essential Tenets and the Book of Confessions and its governance is Presbyterian—ruled by elders—as defined in the Polity and Discipline of ECO, all under the authority of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

The ECO Essential Tenets and Confessions were adopted by the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Houston at its stated meeting on August 15, 2017. These Tenets and Confessions may be found in their entirety at this link: https://eco-pres.org/static/media/uploads/resources/Essential%20Tenets/new_format_-_essential.pdf.

2 OUR CORE VALUES

In 2019, we committed to Here to Serve (<https://heretoserve.fpchouston.org>), a guiding vision to better position First Presbyterian Church to amplify the message of the gospel for the sake of our future, neighborhood, and city. While our vision statement represents who we desire to become, our core values represent the essential DNA of who we are as a church community.

We sincerely want people to know Jesus. An evangelistic-minded church, motivated by the Gospel, with a heart for people to know Christ and experience life transformation.

We are a church of leaders and doers with a desire to effect change in the world. So much of what we do as a church is guided by an entrepreneurial spirit – from church planting to the ministries and even what members are doing in their personal lives and work. We try things. We take chances. We do.

We see strategic opportunity in our building and location. We see possibility in the physical location where God has placed us and the impact this can have in the community – and in Houston – as we look toward the future.

We value the life of the mind. We believe in the power of learning and being intellectually challenged, digging deep into God's Word and all He has for us.

We encourage and invest in relationships. For so many people at First Pres, this church is a home space, and the people inside are family. Members deeply invest in relationships with others at the church, finding community and offering support.

We are a persevering church. Over its history, FPC has weathered many tough seasons. But through it all, it has not shrunk back, relying on God for strength and direction.



Since its founding in 1839, First Presbyterian Church of Houston (FPC) has been an integral part of the spiritual landscape of Houston and Texas. A full, clickable timeline of the 180+ year history of our church is available at fpchouston.org/about/our-story.

As Houston grew from an early transportation hub (rail and shipping and later aviation) to become one of the world's leading cities, FPC sent church planters across the greater Houston area and throughout Texas. Never content to settle for being "comfortable," the church's pastors and elders were always concerned with spiritual growth, evangelism, discipleship, and missions, with a special desire for serving the least fortunate in the local community.

Today, FPC continues this long tradition in church planting efforts and mission in close cooperation with mission partners in the city and the sister churches in our denomination.

FPC's location is highly strategic for ministry and mission. We sit literally at a crossroads, on a thoroughfare fittingly called Main Street. To the north is the city's dynamic central business district, as well as residential communities, Montrose and The Heights,

that are bustling with redevelopment. To the west are some of Houston's most affluent residential areas, West University Place, Boulevard Oaks, Southampton, and Bellaire. To the south is the Texas Medical Center, the world's largest health sciences destination, which is described more fully elsewhere in this profile. And to the east is the city's historic Third Ward, an area of great need where members of our church are deployed each day in volunteer ministries of tutoring and mentoring to support struggling families and to help lift people out of poverty, all while sharing with them the love of Christ.

A reflection of the city in which we live—a dynamic, work-oriented city—the membership of FPC consists largely, although not exclusively, of committed, career-oriented professionals and their families. Many of us work in the nearby centers of education and medicine or the city's vibrant downtown business district. We are blessed with a membership with the resources to give generously to the mission and ministry of the church, both in treasure and in time.

Pre-Covid Sunday worship attendance averaged approximately 1000 across four services: two traditional, one contemporary, and a fourth service that blends elements of both. Many of these worshipers

also participated in a robust assortment of Christian education classes. The pandemic effect required a refocusing of our worship and Sunday school offerings. FPC now offers two services, one contemporary and one traditional. Both services are live-streamed. Approximately 700 worshippers either attend one of these two services or participate via livestream. Onsite attendance is slowly building back toward pre-pandemic levels as our members are feeling increasingly comfortable about returning safely to in-person worship. Most of our adult Sunday school classes, as well as our Youth and Children's Sunday school programs, are back to full in-person participation.

Presently FPC is served by a team of six pastors and a staff of approximately 100 total/65 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. The church's total annual operating budget is approximately \$8 million annually. FPC operates with no debt and our members have blessed the church over the years with healthy reserves. The facilities include a traditional sanctuary seating 800 with a historic pipe organ. Grand Hall, with seating for 1000, is used for the contemporary service as well as special events/concerts/meetings. Grand Hall can actually be converted into a gymnasium with a regulation sized basketball court. Expanded multiple times over the decades, the campus offers a large Fellowship Hall, numerous classrooms, parlors, and kitchen and dining facilities, ministry offices, and spaces for social gatherings.

Adjacent to the church are two mission partners. Presbyterian School, founded by FPC members, is one of the premier PreK-8th grade private schools in Houston. The school (www.pshouston.org) shares facilities with the church and remains a core mission partner of the church with FPC elders serving on its board. Also on an adjacent church property is Main Street Ministries, whose mission is to help Houston's most vulnerable populations. Also founded by FPC members, Main Street Ministries (www.msmhouston.org) now operates independently as a key mission partner with FPC.

Dr. Jim Birchfield, the current Senior Pastor, came to FPC in December 2009, and when he retires in early 2023, he and his wife will relocate from Houston to be in closer proximity to their daughters and grandchildren. Jim spent over a decade in a successful advertising industry career before going into full time ministry at Bel Air Presbyterian in Los Angeles then St. Andrews Presbyterian in Newport Beach. Jim arrived in a time of turmoil but quickly established a return to the historic roots of the church in evangelism and missions. He has created a humble but gifted and purposeful team of associate and assistant pastors and guided the church through its exit from the PC(USA) with grace. He is dearly loved and will be greatly missed.

“The platform is one of a skilled and dedicated pastoral staff and an aligned group of elders, all placed by God in a location of unique significance in a world-class city. Wow! That’s an opportunity! For a Presbyterian pastor who wants to make a difference, this is the best job in America!”

– FPC Clerk of Session

4 ROLE OF THE SENIOR PASTOR

The position we are seeking to fill is that of Senior Pastor and Head of Staff. This position will be opening because our current Senior Pastor, Dr. Jim Birchfield, is planning to retire, ideally no later than the First Quarter of 2023.

The Senior Pastor's primary responsibilities at FPC are preaching, shepherding, and moderating the Session (leadership board). While there is an overarching responsibility to ensure the pastors and staff fulfill the church's mission, day-to-day management of the ministry teams is delegated primarily to the Executive Pastor. As such, we are not looking for someone who

is primarily a "manager." However, if our new pastor were to come to us with 5-10 years of leadership experience in the business world or the professions prior to entering full-time ministry, we would consider that a significant plus for a number of reasons, not the least of which would be the pastor's ability to better connect with and relate to our members, so many of whom fit that profile themselves.

The responsibilities, expectations, and desired attributes of the candidate we seek are set forth in detail in the following sections.

Note: FPC Houston is open to the Senior Pastor being male or female; however, the following sections of this Opportunity Profile utilize male pronouns and adjectives (he, his, etc.) for simplicity and ease of reading. A more detailed explanation of FPC Houston's policy of inclusion on this search is presented in the section entitled "Search and Selection Process."

5 SKILLS REQUIRED IN THE SENIOR PASTOR

Lead by setting an example of faithful living. Preach, teach, and guide. Mentor and develop. Form disciples and send them out.

Leading by Example, Visible and Accessible

- A prophet and prophetic voice in the church and city. A thought leader within ECO.
- A guardian of the historic faith and an advocate of the reformed polity expressed in ECO's "Essential Tenets and Confessional Standards."
- A leader, with a visible prayer life; joyful, approachable, and available to all.
- A student of the Bible, the faith expressed in our creeds, and the times in which we live.

Preach, Teach, & Guide

- Preaching with clarity, power, relevance, and insight. Use an ancient voice for the modern world.
- Teaching for all stages of life, addressing in today's challenges, grounded in the eternal Word of God.
- Guiding our congregation through the complexity of life's challenges. Modeling grace and humility.

Mentor & Develop

- Mentor a diverse team of pastors and senior staff, aligning them toward the mission and goals of FPC Houston.
- Develop a talented team of pastors and senior staff directors, encouraging and inspiring them in their leadership of their own teams and releasing them to move on to greater opportunities in ministry when the time is right.

Forming & Sending

- Forming a team of congregational members, elders, and pastors around Christ's mission.
- Sending out congregational members, elders, and pastors to fulfill Christ's mission to the world.

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PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE SENIOR PASTOR

- A person of prayer and student of the Bible
- Passionate about evangelism and discipleship
- Missions oriented
- Combines expository and topical preaching; communicates the Scriptures with excellence and in a relevant way to a broad range of ages and cultures
- Humble and transparent servant leader
- Self-aware (excellent "EQ") and secure in Christ, fully aware of one's own strengths, weaknesses, vulnerabilities
- Courageous/steadfast in difficulty, not hesitant to express concerns
- Steady temperament/joyful
- High integrity/his word is his bond
- Strong work ethic, yet balanced – has a life outside of church
- Teachable and approachable
- Accomplished written and verbal communication skills.
- Has at least ten years to give to the role, and hopefully 20+.
- A person who embraces innovation, not prone to "maintenance"
- Has a track record for bringing about improvement and growth.
- Has a proven track record of leading and mentoring staff, helping them develop to their full potential
- A leader who, over time, will encourage pastoral and non-ordained staff to grow and flourish in ministry and then, when appropriate, will joyfully release them to move on to greater fruitfulness.

Education/Experience/Personal

- A Master's Degree from an accredited seminary is the minimum educational requirement for this position (e.g., Th.M., M.Div., or equivalent.) A Doctorate in Ministry, Theology, or Biblical Studies would be a plus.
- A minimum of 10 years in pastoral leadership, ideally having managed multiple ordained ministry staff in a multi-service or multi-site environment.
- As previously noted, some experience in business or the professions prior to entering full-time ministry would be desirable, in that this might bring into the mix not only a "real world" perspective but also management and leadership skills that are not taught in seminary.

- Experience in leadership of a church or churches serving a large, ethnically diverse community would be advantageous.
- Demonstrated approach of working closely with worship leaders to ensure the preaching, prayer, and music combine to offer a fully integrated worship experience.
- Reaches beyond the church to the community to share Christ in a holistic approach, in all of their areas of need
- Builds Christians of humility, peace, service, and confidence
- Experience working closely with a Session or similar leadership board in the governance of the church and oversight of its ministries
- The ability to speak from life experiences both in success and failure to communicate the power of the gospel.
- A person who models a Christian marriage and is raising or has raised children to be disciples of Jesus Christ. (This is desired but not required.)

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THE SENIOR PASTOR & PASTORAL STAFF SERVING TOGETHER

As Head of Staff, the Senior Pastor leads a diverse pastoral team that drives the mission of our church. Called to serve God at FPC, the pastoral team...

...has a mission posture of “Here to Serve.”

- Be committed here, to Houston and its spiritual needs.
- Serve confidently in the face of societal uncertainty.
- Show humility when learning of the needs of others.
- Rely always on the example of Jesus.

...is a Connected Community.

- Be together in regular prayer and worship.
- Be connected together in a common mission to Houston
- Build each other up through constant encouragement.
- Keep each other accountable to faith and practice.

...always prioritizes people over programs.

- God works through people he calls into Christ’s service.
- Search for the people Christ calls to his work.
- Develop a team with staying power who love Houston.
- Allow the team to be creative in meeting our mission goals.

...shows focus and prioritization in their work.

- Simplify always—complexity is a tax on progress.
- Focus our resources to allow them to make a difference.
- The priority is always the mission of Jesus—not our mission

...is always learning and improving.

- Never be content with the status quo.
- Use wisely study leave investments.
- Measure what we do—show improvement.
- Learn always and share together what is learned.

8 SENIOR PASTOR TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

The Senior Pastor is accountable for delivery of several critical deliverables in a typical year which are crucial to our ministry and mission.

	Description & Scope	Frequency	Collaboration
Long-Term Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on the cultural, spiritual, and theological issues of our time • What does Christ’s mission mean for us today? • Define the people and resources needed to meet the challenges 	5 years	Session Pastors Key Staff
Yearly Mission & Ministry Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly mission goals, staff goals • Preaching and teaching plan • Human resource review 	Annually	Session Pastors Key Staff
Budget & Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual operations & capital budget • Permanent funds performance, benevolences disbursed • Spending budget review 	Annually 6 months Quarterly	Finance Committee Pastors
People Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development plan; performance review of staff; staff planning • Planned new hires 	6 months	Finance Committee Pastors Personnel
Session Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly finance review • Governance Committee reports • Counseling and pastoral care 	Monthly	Finance Committee Pastors Operations
Performance Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual performance review 	Annually	Advisory Council

The Senior Pastor role is demanding. A 60-hour work week is typical, indeed necessary. The Session believes that the following table sets forth a reasonable time budget for a Pastor to flourish in this role.

	Description	Time Allocation
Personal & Spiritual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer and study for the purposes of personal renewal • Training and preparation for the role of leadership • Time spent with spiritual director—counselor—coach 	10%
Preaching & Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preaching and preparation for preaching • Teaching (Adult Sunday school, Bible Studies, etc. & preparation) • Small group leadership, mission team leadership; writing and communicating 	35%
Serving & Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in church oversight: Session and committee meetings • Denominational oversight meetings 	15%
Mentoring & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one mentoring of pastoral staff, investing time in the lives of others • Lead training and team building of pastoral staff • Model Christian formation, develop it in others, demand it of pastoral team 	20%
Pastoral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship planning; conduct weddings, funerals, perform baptisms • Congregational visits: attend Sunday School classes, small groups, one-on-one meetings • Counseling and pastoral care 	10%
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting and communication; administration and paperwork 	10%

Consistent with the Presbyterian model of governance going back hundreds of years, FPC Houston has historically relied on a body of ordained Elders of the church, collectively known as the Session, to lead and manage the church's affairs. More recently, with the agreement of and helpful guidance from our denomination, A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), we have significantly revamped this governance model.

The Session is still our "sovereign body" and the ultimate authority after Jesus Christ as Head of the Church in all matters affecting the health, mission, and ministry of FPC. However, its role in the day-to-day management of the church has been dramatically reduced, with those responsibilities handed over to the staff. The Session's role is now a more focused one that centers on strategic oversight, true governance (similar to a Board of Directors), spiritual leadership, and prayer.

This division of responsibilities between the Session and the staff is more particularly described in our Governance Manual as follows: The Session shall focus on questions of "whom" (i.e., whom has God called us to be in Christ) and "what" (i.e., what is God calling us to do). Questions of "how" are delegated to the pastoral staff under the direction of the Senior Pastor.

Regarding the composition of the Session, there are, in accordance with our by-laws, eighteen Ruling Elders, consisting of three classes of six Elders each elected by the congregation. A new class of six Elders is elected each year to replace the most senior class which then rotates out of service. One member of each class is

designated by the Session as Clerk of Session for that class. As such there are three Clerks of Session in active service at any point in time, with the one from the most senior class designated as Senior Clerk.

In addition to these 18 Ruling Elders, the Session includes as voting members the Senior Pastor and all Associate and Assistant Pastors on the staff, who collectively carry the designation Teaching Elders. In that they serve both as members of the staff and members of the Session, the pastors have responsibilities that fall on both sides of the division of responsibilities described above and provide a critically important bridge between Session and staff.

The Senior Pastor is the Head of Staff of the church and Moderator of the Session. Under our current management model, there is an Executive Pastor who reports to the Senior Pastor. Associate and Assistant Pastors and key non-ordained department heads (e.g., the Chief Operating Officer) report to the Executive Pastor.

To summarize, the Session maintains and respects a clear distinction between its role in setting the mission guidelines on the one hand, and the role of staff, under the leadership of the Senior Pastor, in implementation and management on the other.

All of FPC's ministry areas work together to equip our congregation to fulfill its mission:

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

Outreach leads the way in creating new spaces and places for people to experience the gospel for the first time and take their first steps on the discipleship journey. It establishes strategic footholds in our neighborhoods, providing opportunities for FPC Covenant Partners to be sent on mission.

- **Rev. Emmanuel Paulpeter, Pastor of Outreach**

Worship fosters an experience for our congregation and guests that intentionally and thoughtfully ushers them into God's presence to be transformed by the gospel and renewed by the Holy Spirit.

- **Dan Wagner, Director of Worship**

Community Life fosters healthy community by developing our caring ministries, connecting new people into the life of our church, and providing regular opportunities for the whole church body to gather together for intergenerational fellowship and celebration.

- **Rev. Dr. Jon Crantz, Pastor of Community Life**

Equipping provides an environment for adults to take ownership of their faith, connect in meaningful Christian relationships, and mature in a biblical understanding of what it means to be a Christian in our world.

- **Rev. Caitlin Rhodes-Karahadian, Pastor of Equipping**

Children & Family evangelizes and discipless our children from the time they come out of the womb until they move on to middle school, grounding them in God's Word, connecting them into the life of the church, and providing a foundation for them in their faith development as they move forward in life.

- **Stacey Rockwell, Director of Children and Family Ministries**

Next Generation nurtures a sticky faith that has deep biblical roots, wrestles with difficult questions, and intentionally discipless our young people through the difficult transitions between middle school to high school, high school to college, and college to career.

- **Pastor of Next Gen Ministries - open, active search**

Ministry Support aligns our facility and financial resources with the purposes of our ministries. It provides a comprehensive understanding of our resources, creative solutions to ongoing maintenance issues, and faithful and transparent stewardship.

- **Hunter Johnson, Chief Operating Officer**

Media-Communications keeps us technologically up-to-date, operated by trained staff and volunteers, and leading the way in keeping us relevant and proactive in our media-saturated world.

- **Celeste Lanier, Director of Communications & Media**

Note: The purpose of the foregoing is to provide an overview of the key ministry areas at FPC Houston and the team members who lead and execute. In many cases, these team members work with dedicated volunteers from the congregation. This is not a comprehensive list of every ministry of the church, of which there are dozens. Within each segment listed above there are numerous specific named ministries, most of which are identified and further described on our website at www.fpchouston.org/about/leadership-staff.



Several years ago, *The Economist* magazine named Houston a “future city;” Houston had the attributes of an emerging group of cities that would define the future. Today, that prediction is coming true. Houston is the fourth largest city (by population) in the United States and will soon overtake Chicago as the third largest. At the same time, Houston is the most ethnically diverse city in the U.S., recently overtaking New York. Spanish and Vietnamese are the most prominent local non-English languages. One-fourth of the residents of the metropolitan area (more than one million) were born outside of the U.S.

The city has become known for its exceptional quality of life, a highly educated workforce, global access, and business-friendly climate. Simply put, Houston is a great place to live, work and worship.

FPC is located just down Main Street from the Texas Medical Center, considered the largest life sciences destination in the world. With 106,000 employees, 61 institutions, and thousands of volunteers and patient visits, over 160,000 people visit Texas Medical Center each day. FPC sits in the middle of Houston’s Museum District (19 museums, <https://houmuse.org>). Immediately north of the church campus, Greentown

Labs (<https://greentownlabs.com/houston>) is a new 40,000-square-foot climate tech incubator. Adjacent is Ion Houston (<https://www.ionhouston.com/>) a 266,000-square-foot Innovation center bringing together local entrepreneurial, corporate, and academic communities to address some of the world’s greatest problems. The renowned MD Anderson cancer center leads the world in innovative and groundbreaking cancer treatments and is one mile from FPC.

There are more than 60 degree-granting institutions of higher learning in the Houston metropolitan area. The largest of these is the University of Houston, five miles from FPC, with 43,000 students. Rice University, one of the most highly-regarded private universities in the country, is located less than a mile from the church campus.

In the broader city, Houston is home to 500 aerospace, aviation, manufacturing, and research companies and is the undisputed energy capital of the world. Houston is home to NASA’s Johnson Space Center, and Houstonians proudly point out that the first word spoken from the surface of the moon by Neil Armstrong, the Commander of Apollo 11, was “Houston” followed by “the Eagle has landed.” The Port of Houston is the largest in the U.S.

in terms of gross waterborne tonnage, all the more remarkable in that the city is some fifty miles from the Gulf of Mexico. These economic centers, along with numerous Fortune 500 headquarters, create in Houston a strong and diversified local economy.

Outside of work and commerce, Houston has many recreational opportunities. The Theater District has seven renowned performing arts organizations plus numerous other venues, creating the largest concentration of theatre seats outside of New York City. The city boasts a fabulous food scene with every combination of ethnic cuisine offered in the south's food capital. Houstonians, on average, dine out 6.9 times a week (The national average is 4.9.) and enjoy great cuisine often at attractive prices! The city also enjoys the largest amount of park acreage in the U.S., including historic Memorial Park currently undergoing a \$200 million redevelopment and a biking/jogging path network of 300 miles!

Houston is considered a great sports town, including both spectator sports and participatory sports. Houstonians have a wide range of professional sports teams to root for, as the city is home to the Astros (MLB), Texans (NFL), Dynamo (MLS) and Rockets (NBA). Houston hosts a regular PGA tour stop, the Houston Open, and will soon host a major tournament on the LPGA tour. Houston also hosts the annual Chevron Houston Marathon, an event that attracts entrants from

all over the world and engages thousands of volunteers. In addition to watching professionals play golf, Houstonians love to play it themselves, probably owing in part to the fact that the climate allows virtually year-round play. There are 36 golf courses within the Houston city limits plus another 21 courses in the surrounding suburban area. Many of these courses are open to the public and eight of them are municipal courses. Other outdoor activities popular with residents of this area include hunting, fishing, boating, camping, hiking, cycling, and running. Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico are a short drive from the city, as are several large lakes and reservoirs.

Texas and Houston enjoy a lower cost of living than most American cities. No state income taxes, comparatively low housing costs, and cheap commodities are major factors.

Other insights and comments about what make Houston special can be found at www.houstoniamag.com/news-and-city-life/2013/03/250-reasons-to-love-houston-march-2013.



Links are provided below to two worship services that feature sermons by our Senior Pastor, Dr. Jim Birchfield.

[Traditional Service \(9/19/21\): How We Change](#)

[Contemporary Service \(9/26/21\): Compassion & Kindness](#)

FPC Houston's search for a Senior Pastor will be led by a Pastor Nominating Committee elected and seated by vote of the congregation on October 3, 2021. This committee (the PNC) consists of 11 members. The PNC will be supported in the search by Dingman Company, Inc., an executive search firm that has been selected and retained by the Session to assist in the search process. Dingman Company is a respected national firm with specialization in recruiting leadership for faith-based organizations, including churches and seminaries, among others. The PNC will also be supported by the Session, through prayer, encouragement, and, where requested, specific advice, including but not limited to clarification of or possible changes to the position description, for which the Session carries ultimate responsibility.

It is the preference of the PNC that initial

communications from or on behalf of prospective candidates or referral sources be directed to Dingman Company. The firm's CEO, Mr. Bruce Dingman, will lead the search for the firm and can be reached at [**bruce@dingman.com**](mailto:bruce@dingman.com). More complete contact details for the consultant may be found elsewhere in this Opportunity Profile. Applications, inquiries, and referrals sent directly to the PNC or any of its members, or to members of the Session or staff of FPC, will be forwarded to the search consultant for evaluation and possible inclusion in the process.

In consultation with the PNC, the search consultant will compile an initial list of prospective candidates and, where appropriate, reach out to those prospective candidates and referral sources to present the opportunity. Regarding those candidates who appear to hold promise of a strong fit with this opportunity

and who have an interest, the consultant will conduct preliminary interviews and gather more detailed candidate information including a full curriculum vitae, a completed candidate questionnaire, references, etc.

The consultant will recommend to the PNC a shortlist of candidates to be interviewed by the PNC. There is no fixed number of candidates who will reach this stage of the process, but the PNC hopes to be able to interview multiple qualified, interested candidates (More than one, no more than five might be a reasonable guideline). The ultimate responsibility for this selection rests with the PNC in prayerful submission to the leading of the Spirit.

It is important to note that the middle initial of the PNC stands for “nominating.” Under longstanding Presbyterian polity, the ultimate decision to call a pastor will rest with the congregation at large, who will be asked to affirm the nomination from the PNC brought before a congregational meeting called for that purpose.

It is our sincere belief that God has already selected and is preparing the person who will be FPC’s next Senior Pastor, and that through His Holy Spirit He will reveal that person’s identity to the PNC in His own time. The PNC, the Session, the search consultant, and the membership of our church are committed to bathing the entire process in prayer and to being open and submissive to the leading of the Spirit at all stages of the process.

Eligibility for Consideration and Statement on Non-Discrimination

A complete statement of required and desired background and experience is presented elsewhere in this Opportunity Profile. For the purposes of this section on search and selection process, it is important to affirm that First Presbyterian Church of Houston does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race or ethnicity, national origin, sex, or disability. While

some religious denominations limit ordination to offices of leadership to men, that is not the case in A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). Furthermore, FPC-Houston has a long history of women serving in leadership positions in our church, including, on multiple occasions, the position of Clerk of Session, which is the highest position that a Ruling Elder can hold at FPC.

As a faith-based institution, we do reserve the right to consider religious belief and practice as criteria in hiring decisions as permitted by law. While it is not essential that the successful candidate be currently ordained as a Teaching Elder (Pastor) in ECO, only candidates who are eligible for ordination in ECO will be considered. Our PNC will consult in confidence with our denominational executives to confirm such eligibility. Furthermore, only candidates who fully affirm the [Essential Tenets and Confessional Standards](#) set forth by our denomination on its website (www.eco-pres.org) as well as the mission statement, statement of faith, and core values described on our church website (<https://fpchouston.org/about/our-beliefs/>) will receive consideration for this position.

A Word About Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a natural concern for prospective candidates in any executive search process. The search consultant and the PNC are fully committed to respecting the confidentiality of all communications regarding this search process. This includes whether or not a particular individual is under consideration for the position or has even had contact with the consultant or the PNC.

Search Timeline

We do not have a specific timeline for completing this search and are committed to working at the process for as long as it takes, confident that the Lord will clearly reveal His plan to all stakeholders, including the selected candidate, in His own time. The search officially began with the seating of the PNC on October 3, 2021 and will be considered “open” until the position is filled.

Transition of Leadership

Our current Senior Pastor, The Rev. Dr. Jim Birchfield, has graciously given our church leadership what we believe to be a comfortable timeline leading up to his retirement, to allow for an orderly and thorough recruitment process. He has further agreed to assist in the process of recruiting his replacement in whatever way is most appropriate. Finally, the Session has requested, and Dr. Birchfield has committed to a suitable period of overlap to allow the new Senior Pastor to become better acclimated and integrated into the church and the staff before Dr. Birchfield's final departure into retirement. Details of this overlap will be worked out between the successful candidate, Dr. Birchfield, and the Session once the search has been concluded.

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CONTACT INFO FOR SEARCH RELATED COMMUNICATIONS

Persons interested in applying for this position or recommending a prospective candidate, please visit www.dingman.com and click on "Our Searches" or reach out to the following contacts:



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