“More people, more like Christ”
FOCUS

Our goal is *More People, More Like Christ*, and this is embodied in our intent to *Exalt* our God in our weekly worship together and in our daily lives, *Equip* our people to grow in understanding of the scriptures and enable them to share the Gospel, and *Extend* beyond the boundaries of church to bring the gospel to our local North Shore community and to the world beyond in accordance with the Great Commission as expressed in Matthew 28:16-20.

OUR CONGREGATION

Our congregation is a mix of ages with both elderly retired folk, younger families, college and seminary students, and everything in between. We are not yet greatly diverse in ethnic and racial makeup but more diverse than the town in which we are located. Although we are located in Ipswich and many of our members live in Ipswich, we are a regional church with members and friends from across the North Shore.

Our worship service is a mix of traditional and contemporary music. We have two Sunday morning services, and an intervening hour for Christian Education and fellowship.

Average Sunday attendance before the COVID restrictions was 350. Current attendance is 250 with additional households continuing to stream services online. There are 278 communicant members including 22 covenant children, but we also attract many who are not members of our church but maintain membership in their home churches as they are students in the local area.
Ipswich is a seacoast town about 30 miles northeast of Boston, Massachusetts. It was founded in 1634 in an area that was known by Native Americans as Agawam. Ipswich boasts more surviving first-period homes (pre-1725) than any other place in the nation.

Today's population is a little over 14,000. The local churches include two Congregational churches, a Baptist church, a Methodist church, an Episcopal church, a Greek Orthodox church, a Roman Catholic church, and two Russian Orthodox churches in addition to First Presbyterian Church North Shore. Pre-COVID, a group of local pastors met regularly and includes the Catholic priest, the pastor of one of the Congregational churches, the Episcopal rector, the Baptist pastor, the Methodist pastor, and our pastor. Together they have sponsored a number of joint events, including Lenten activities, seminars on end-of-life matters, and discussions of Henri Nouwen’s book *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Additionally, over the last several years the churches have supported the Ipswich Refugee Program that helps to resettle refugees. Several members from our church have worked as English language tutors and advocates for refugee families.

Ipswich is serviced by a commuter rail line to Boston and is located in Boston’s North Shore region which contains many towns as well as some small cities, including Gloucester, Danvers, Beverly, and Salem. The North Shore also features Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Gordon College. The church has enjoyed a strong relationship with these two schools, and over the years we have had students, faculty and staff from these two institutions worship and serve with us. The church has served as an internship location for many Gordon-Conwell students.
**Our history**

**FOUNDING**

The origin of First Presbyterian Church (FPC) dates back to the mid-1950s when Gordon College and Divinity School moved out of Boston to the northeast coastal region of Massachusetts known as the North Shore. In 1959 a group called the Presbyterian Fellowship began meeting for Sunday services in the homes of two Gordon professors and their wives, Charles and Ruth Schauffele, and Burton and Esther Goddard. Worship was held in the Goddards’ living room and Sunday school met at the Schauffeles’ home.

**1960s**

In 1960 the church was received as First Presbyterian Church of Hamilton by the Presbytery of New York and New England of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The new church purchased the former Methodist church building on Railroad Avenue in Hamilton in 1961.

In 1964 the church called Wendell L. Rockey as its first pastor. He and his wife Trudi led the fledgling congregation through its formative years before taking another call from the Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in 1975.

**1970s**

In 1976 FPC called Kenneth Ironside as its second pastor. Under the leadership of Ken and his wife Valerie the church continued to grow, with particular influx from the Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary communities. In the early 1980s Ken accepted another call from a church in New Jersey.

**1980s**

James Kern was FPC’s third pastor from 1983 to 1990. In 1986 the church formed an expansion committee in response to the church’s continuing growth. This resulted in the planting of another church, Merrimack Valley Presbyterian Church, in nearby North Andover in 1987 under the leadership of John Van Meerbeke, a recent graduate of Gordon-Conwell. It also resulted in the purchase of our current property in 1988, formerly occupied by a retail store called The Christmas Angel that operated out of the current church office building. Jim and his wife Nan left FPC in 1990 to take a position at the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston.

**1990s**

God was quick to fill our new church building during the 1990s. Under the leadership of its fourth pastor, Charles Wingard, attendance at worship services more than doubled. During this time the church actively focused on foreign and local missions, sending missionaries to many areas around the globe. It also developed a vibrant youth ministry under the leadership of youth pastor Jon Evans, who is still with us today. By 1997 the church had launched a building program for a new Christian Life Center, which now enables us to conduct most of our activities on the church property.

**2000s**

Soon after the turn of the century FPC called its fifth senior pastor, David O’Leary, as well its first associate pastor, Greg Hills. Under their leadership the church continued to grow, eventually leading to the addition of a third worship service that adopted a more contemporary style. David and his wife Debbie led the church through a time of economic uncertainty emphasizing both the sovereignty and the grace of God in Christ.
In 2010 the church took another leap of faith by calling another associate pastor, Derek Baker, in anticipation of launching a second campus, which began in Danvers in September 2015. Derek brought a set of gifts that include church planting, preaching, teaching, music and shepherding.

In 2012 Greg Hills became FPC’s sixth senior (or “lead”) pastor. Under God’s sovereign guidance, we continue to pursue our vision, begun at that time, of More People, More Like Christ. We desire to be a people who Exalt in every moment, Equip for every purpose, and Extend to everyone.

From 2014 through 2016 FPC saw continued growth and purposeful transitions and expansion. We strategically adopted three overseas locations, referred to as “global epicenters” for global missions focus. Locally we launched a second campus in Danvers and began a building campaign for campus expansion in Ipswich. We also began a denominational transition into the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

In April of 2017 FPC was received into the PCA (Southern New England presbytery). Following the launch of a second campus, we saw growth in both locations. The Ipswich campus called Jonathan Conant as an associate pastor in January 2018. Our satellite location had grown to the extent that in 2021 the Danvers campus particularized as Center Grace Church and is now pastored by Derek Baker with Nathaniel Lee as their associate pastor. We continue to partner in the shared passion of global missions as well as some administrative matters.

In 2020 we began construction of the ‘Glue,’ an open-concept welcome center connecting our sanctuary with the Christian Life Center. Completed in August 2021, it includes a coffee bar, fireplace, and numerous meeting areas. This space provides a great opportunity to help knit our members together and support our church focus and vision.
GLOBAL MISSIONS

For more than 20 years we have maintained an active role in supporting cross-cultural missions. We fund missions largely through Faith Promise giving ($220,000) and focus on three global epicenters where the gospel is relatively unknown — the Arab world, Bangladesh, and China. We also fund college outreach at several locations in the United States, and outreach to people in eastern Massachusetts who are from our epicenter areas. We have a yearly missions conference in the fall that helps to bring the need for cross-cultural missions to our doorstep.

LOCAL MISSIONS

Through local missions we reach out to the town of Ipswich and other North Shore programs including Amirah (support for women who have been trafficked), the Ipswich Refugee Program (helping refugees who are resettling in Ipswich), Straight Ahead Ministries (reaching adolescents in local detention centers), Family Promise (working with homeless families), and foster care (members serve as foster parents/families for children placed by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Family and as support groups for each of those core foster families).

WOMEN’S MINISTRIES

Through a number of weekly Bible studies, various special events, and a popular annual retreat, we encourage the spiritual growth of our women of all ages. Partnering with local missions, we seek meaningful ways to reach out and support programs affecting women on the North Shore.

MEN’S MINISTRIES

Men’s Ministries seeks to provide opportunities for service and fellowship through monthly men’s breakfasts, an annual retreat, and other outreach events, but the main vehicle for sharing life together is the continued growth and development of Discipleship Groups. “D-Groups” are composed of four or five men who meet on a weekly basis. D-Groups use various curricula but most use Gospel & Grace from Mission to the World. Men’s Ministries has partnered with our epicenter in Bangladesh to disciple young believers, and several of our men have traveled to support the Dhaka Business Development Center.

YOUTH MINISTRIES

We have separate and active middle school and high school groups that meet weekly, and many of our students are involved in mentoring relationships. We also support an annual youth missions trip; we call it our Missions 101 introduction. For many years we have gone to Voice of Calvary in Jackson, Mississippi, but recently we have been serving with the Providence Rescue Mission in Providence, Rhode Island. We support and attend the middle school and high school Deerwander Bible Conferences each summer and many of our members and staff volunteer their time there as well.

CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES

This area involves not only our weekly Sunday Christian education program for our children but also Wednesday evening activities with Rocks and GEMS (boys and girls clubs), and a summer Vacation Bible School.
20Thirty

Ministry to young adults in the area. Most of these are post-college age who meet regularly for fellowship and mutual support in the faith.

FPC Transforms

This is our adult Christian education program for Sunday mornings. It seeks to equip all of our members, from college age through our seniors, with quality Sunday morning classes that will be part of the transformation process as our church endeavors to make more people, more like Christ.

Small Group Ministry

We encourage our people to participate in small group ministry to encourage each other and to grow in our knowledge of the Word of God and to pray together.

Our Committees

The following committees support our ministries and administrative functions:

- Budget and Personnel
- Children’s Ministries
- Deacons
- Facilities Expansion
- Fellowship
- Global Missions Team
- Local Missions Team
- Meals Ministry
- Men’s Ministries
- Session
- 20Thirty
- Trustees
- Welcome Ministry Team
- Women’s Ministries
- Worship Committee
- Youth Committee
Leadership

STAFF

Marion Clark – Interim Lead Pastor
Jonathan Conant – Associate Pastor
Jon Evans – Youth Director and Church Administrator
Director of Children’s Ministries (now hiring)
Director of Women’s Ministries (now hiring)
Maureen Oh – Music Director
Cara Hatchen – Office Manager

SESSION

Marion Clark – Interim Session Moderator
Jeff Azadian
Jonathan Conant – Associate Pastor
Jon Evans – Youth Director and Church Administrator
Rob Joss – Clerk
George Papanicolaou
Russ Queen
Greg Smith
Meirwyn Walters

DEACONS

Ken Harding
Dan Janssen
Kate McMillan
Mark Panjwani
Randy Rydebeck – chair
Pam Whitmore
The Lead Pastor of FPC shall meet the New Testament requirements for the office of teaching elder as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The Lead Pastor shall be responsible in concert with the Session of FPC to provide spiritual leadership and oversight for the congregation and her members at FPC. This consists of the following elements:

WORSHIP

FPC seeks to worship God in spirit and in truth. The Lead Pastor will strive to inculcate a posture of worship in the congregation in all that we do throughout our lives. In addition, in conjunction with the Session, the Lead Pastor will be responsible for the overall tone, content, and focus of worship services and is expected to work in conjunction with participants to create a worshipful context consistent with our vision of “More People, More Like Christ.”

- In conjunction with the Worship Committee, plan and lead Sunday morning worship services as well as other worship services of the church
- Oversee the ministry of the Preaching the Word of God on the occasions established by the Session
- Provide leadership for the preaching schedule to include pastoral staff, interns, and guest preachers
- Oversee the Celebration and Administration of the Sacraments: Lord’s Supper (1st Sunday of each month) and Baptisms
- Oversee admission of new members

PREACHING AND TEACHING

FPC loves preaching. The Lead Pastor will be the primary preacher for Sunday morning worship and is expected to be exceptional at exegetically uncovering truths in Scripture and challenging and comforting the congregation with those truths. FPC has a long history of strong, Reformed, exegetical preachers and we expect to continue that tradition.

- Provide exceptional preaching, demonstrated by strong exegesis and exposition, timely, interesting and relevant illustrations, strong and clear actionable applications of biblical truths to our lives, and persuasive challenges/comforts to the congregation
- With relative frequency, lead adult Christian Education and Profession of Faith classes and other educational programs of the church

DISCIPLESHIP / LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Session of FPC seeks to be more intentional in our ministries with a renewed focus towards transforming lives through formal and informal discipleship. The Lead Pastor will play a key role in the development and implementation of this focus.

- Work with the Session to develop and implement a plan for deeper discipleship and transparency as outlined in our Planning document
- Lead FPC toward a culture of pouring ourselves into each other’s lives, with the goal that everyone is being discipled, particularly members, and is discipling others
- Work with the Session to identify those in our congregation with leadership calling and gifts at each stage of their lives
- Oversee leadership training and development for congregational leaders
- Ensure that we are all on mission by consistently communicating the church’s vision and goals to the leaders and the congregation as agreed upon with the Session

EVANGELISM

FPC needs to better develop a culture of evangelism. The Lead Pastor must be personally and actively involved in multi-faceted evangelism.

- Engage the congregation in personal one-on-one evangelism
- Encourage a culture of actively reaching out to
those who do not know the Lord
- Oversee formal and informal training programs in evangelism
- Lead by example

GLOBAL MISSIONS

FPC has a long history of involvement in Global Missions. The Lead pastor is expected to be supportive of that focus.

- Take an active role in working with the Global Missions Team (GMT) to plan the annual missions conference and work with the GMT in developing the next phase of global missions
- Actively support the Faith Promise initiative for funding of global missions
- Emphasize and model the importance of global missions to the congregation

PASTORAL CARE

The Session of FPC seeks a Lead Pastor who will play a leading role, in conjunction with the Session, in biblical counseling, spiritual comfort, and intercessory prayer for the needs of the congregation.

- Counsel families and individuals in the church and refer people to professional counselors when needed
- Contact prospective members and inactive members inviting them into the community of the church
- Provide couples with premarital counseling
- Officiate at weddings and funerals
- Visit the sick and injured in homes and hospitals

SESSION

The Lead Pastor will personally invest in the spiritual lives of the Elders through informal and formal means.

- Engage in spiritual relationships (mutual discipleship/accountability) with fellow teaching and ruling Elders
- Shepherd the Elders’ families
- Serve as Moderator of the Session; including setting the agenda, task delegation, etc., in conjunction with the Elders

CHURCH STAFF

FPC seeks a culture of mutual support, accountability and cooperation among its staff. The Lead Pastor will oversee all church staff.

- Act as chief of staff, leading and moderating weekly staff meetings of church employees
- Oversee and assist in the Associate Pastor’s ministerial development
- Manage staff responsibilities and oversee personal spiritual development
- Work with Session to recommend roles and staff changes (additions or terminations)
- Provide annual written performance reviews of staff
- Ensure all staff with supervisory roles are providing annual written performance reviews to those under their care

BROADER COMMUNITY

The Lead Pastor will have a presence in the community, both specifically in Ipswich and the surrounding communities.

- Cooperate with local churches in appropriate ecumenical efforts and witness
- Collaborate with and support the work of local community agencies and programs as appropriate
- Serve as a leading advocate for Congregational outreach efforts

PRESBYTERY, GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Lead Pastor will be the main point of contact between the congregation and the different denominational entities.

- Pledge to uphold the standards of the PCA and Book of Church Order (BCO)
- Participate in the required meetings/duties/ministries of Presbytery and General Assembly (GA)
- Report to the Session about the topics before the Presbytery and GA, and congregation as needed
PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES AND DEMONSTRATED SKILLS

• A personal life characterized by holy living and an intimate walk with the Lord
• A rich personal prayer life
• A strong emphasis on the gift of preaching and teaching, applying the truth, wisdom, discernment and relevance of God’s Word
• An unwavering commitment to, and a history of discipling others
• An aptitude for leading corporate worship and marshaling all components (music, confession, prayer, sermon etc)
• A heart for evangelism (both local and global)
• A commitment to pastoral care, with strong interpersonal skills, and an ability to work well and collaborate with others
• A strong, organized working style, with a demonstrated ability to delegate tasks, manage results, and work closely with others

BACKGROUND/EXPERIENCE

• Current or qualified to be an Ordained Minister in the Presbyterian Church of America
• MDiv from a seminary which supports the teaching of Reformed Theology
• Demonstrated life and professional experience and qualifications to lead a congregation of more than 350 active members

Accepting applications at FirstPresMASearch@gmail.com, or contact Cindy Fitzgerald at 508-783-2389
I. STRENGTHS / WEAKNESSES / OPPORTUNITIES / THREATS

**STRENGTHS**

- Capable leadership at all levels: Session, pastoral, staff, committees
- Commitment to preaching of the Word, in-depth Bible teaching and reformed theology without “being in your face”; Sunday school programs
- Strong core of people who love Christ and take faith seriously; grace-based relationships
- Broad spectrum of ministries and programs for all ages and interests
- Multigenerational with many long-term members
- Commitment to global missions
- Sunday morning worship service

**WEAKNESSES**

- Lacking identity and ministry in Ipswich; not well connected to town
- Too much reliance on programs; not invested enough in building relationships or in discipling; identifying at-risk marriages/people
- Leadership development and care for men and women leaders at all levels
- Overstaffed and a reliance on staff instead of volunteers for ministry needs; using spiritual gifts of the congregation
- Inward-focused; evangelism is not a core part of the culture
- Not enough reliance on the Spirit
- Choir and traditional music program; our current investment in music is misaligned
- We have insufficiently engaged people in our church, especially women and youth

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Utilization of location: Gordon, GCTS, Agawam Village, Riverbend, gateway to Ipswich; SSU, Endicott
- Instability in world creates opportunities to share the gospel; great need on North Shore
- North Shore Gospel Partnership (NSGP) and partnering with other churches; collaboration with other churches
- The world is coming to us
- Utilizing and rethinking our new space
- COVID-19 creates need for personal connection but also virtual connections and virtual church
- Next generation is oriented towards virtual means of communication
- Multigenerational care for families; wraparound services to those coming to our church heightened by the pandemic
- PCA and Mission to the World (MTW) affiliation

**THREATS**

- External political and social environment attacking Christianity and the Church
- North Shore becoming very expensive and homogeneous
- Declining enrollment at Gordon and GCTS
- Culture: busyness, consumerism, me centered, technology dominated, divisions
- COVID-19: government restrictions, lack of face-to-face; digital church permanency; internal potential political dissensions based on current political environment
- Next generation: technology, social media, gospel decision making, carrying on the faith
II. GENERAL DIRECTION/FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 3–5 YEARS

After a thorough evaluation of our strengths and weaknesses, we believe that the most effective and sustainable pathway to Exalting, Equipping, and Extending lies in focusing more proactively on discipleship and mentorship. Jesus’ command to make disciples is foundational to our relationships as we seek to cultivate a grace-filled, transformative community. Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations, and it is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to do so.

We plan to be more intentional in our worship, ministries, and relationships to foster genuine community, costly transparency, and church-wide involvement in discipling and mentoring relationships. Discipling happens both formally and informally. We want to create a culture where each one of us, as a natural outgrowth of our identity as disciples, is actively investing in the lives of others whether they are a first-time visitor, a long time attender, or an acquaintance in the community.

This will mean that the primary question in evaluating our ministries and outreach is not “how many” but “how transformed” in our evaluation of our ministries and outreach. By God’s grace we are confident that the “how many” will follow. To that end, each ministry and activity of the church should continually evaluate its effectiveness in both formal and informal spiritual discipleship of those whom that ministry touches. We want them to be equipped and sent to makes disciples who will make other disciples.

III. DESIRED OUTCOME

We will know we are succeeding when we are a multiplying community of disciples of Christ worshiping Him joyfully, serving one another sacrificially, and communicating the gospel to others enthusiastically, from Ipswich to the ends of the earth.

IV. “DISCIPLE” DEFINITION AND DESIRED GROWTH MEASURES

A disciple of Christ:

- worships our God in and through all of life.
- recognizes one’s sinfulness and constant need for grace.
- is consistently growing, maturing, and being sanctified in his or her faith.
- moves forward with hope in the Lord when experiencing setbacks.
- seeks to obey the Lord in all aspects of his or her life.
- evidences the fruit of the Spirit in increasing measure and experiences contentment, joy and peace in all circumstances.
- regularly studies the Bible seeking all of its riches to live and love as God intends.
- seeks guidance and support from fellow Christians and the elders when in need.
- bears the burdens of fellow Christians as he or she is able.
- is an ambassador and witness for the Lord wherever the Lord places him or her.
- multiplies other disciples who will then do the same.

We recognize that each person in our congregation will be at differing stages of spiritual maturity. Our focus will be to intentionally, both formally and informally, assist each of us to be moving constantly to greater maturity.
V. GETTING THERE

We will seek to model our leadership, ministries, and relationships to develop marks of discipleship in the lives of our believers. Specifically, we plan to:

• invest in worship and growing in our understanding that worship is vital to our individual growth, but more importantly to our growth together
• devote ourselves to the lives of others by formal and informal mentoring.
• demonstrate transparency with each other that can thrive in authentic spiritual friendships.
• foster a safe environment that encourages truth in love that leads to transformation and growth in following Christ.
• practice hospitality by opening our homes and lives to people different from ourselves.
• teach from the pulpit and in classes how to formally and informally help disciple others.
• create a culture of discipleship driven first by the session. The session will lead by example in their own personal lives starting with investing deeper with those under their shepherding care and regularly discipling at least one person.
• leverage the elder advocate groups, by ministering and discipling each other in the context of those care groups.
• develop a more intentional gospel outreach effort to attract and build relationships with unbelievers or new Christians to experience or become part of our community.
• task each ministry to develop and articulate to the Session their ongoing plans for deeper formal and informal disciple making actions and activities within their ministries; and develop concrete benchmarks for what a maturing disciple looks like in their ministry.
• use to good advantage excellent digital content, both generally and individually, to facilitate both connecting those we know and reaching those we do not.
• utilize our Christian education program even more effectively to accomplish discipling.

VI. LEAD PASTOR QUALIFICATIONS AND LEADERSHIP EMPHASIS

The next lead pastor will need to be one who finds true resonance in our goal and has the qualities necessary to lead this effort of deepening disciple-making. He will take the lead role discipling the leaders of our church. Ideally, this person will have a prior track record of creating this type of culture and model, although personal characteristic and exhibited habits will also be considered. Committee leaders and staff members must exhibit an active involvement in both formal and informal disciple making. Evaluation of potential new leaders’ experience and propensity must be considered when making placements.