

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

### OUR CHURCH IS IN TRANSITION

First Pres is going through some significant changes.

#### **Pastor John Retired**

Our pastor of 34 years, Rev. John S. Sheldon retired in July 2023.

We are currently inviting guest preachers each week.

Rev. Jim Shanley preaches on the 4th and 5th Sunday of the month and officiates the Sacrament of The Lords Supper each 4th Sunday.

#### **Dismissal from the PC(USA) denomination**

In August 2023, our Session submitted a "Rationale for Dismissal" to the Presbytery for Southern New Jersey requesting our congregation be dismissed from the PC(USA) denomination. We are currently resolving the terms of dismissal. We plan to join the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) denomination.

### MISSION STUDY

Please review our Mission Study dated 12/2/23 for important information about our church's history, community, Mission Statement and vision for the future.

### PULPIT NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Cherie Arias

Joe Laielli

Kevin Olandt (Chair) [kjolandt@gmail.com](mailto:kjolandt@gmail.com)

Mary Wilson

Brad Young

### MINISTER'S COMPENSATION PACKAGE INCLUDES:

Salary	To be determined commensurate with experience
FICA/Medicare Offset	100%
Housing	Pastor is expected to reside in the Manse at no cost
Manse Utilities	100%
Pension	Included at 25% of Compensation Package
Health Insurance	Included
Auto Reimbursement	\$2,000/year
Continuing Ed	To Be Determined
Books/Subscriptions	\$400/year
Cellphone	\$600/year
Paid Time Off	One month vacation/year (6) Holidays/ year (10) Sick Days/ year (2) Weeks Continuing Education/ year

### CHURCH SCHOOL:

Our church does not run a school. However, we have hosted the Westminster Christian Academy (WCA) (<https://www.westminsterchristianacademy.org>) for many years. WCA is a private school that meets three days a week in our facility from August thru May. The school currently serves over 100 students in grades K-12.

# Mission Study Report



## First Presbyterian Church

of Ocean City, NJ

December 2, 2023

## INTRODUCTION

The Mission Study Committee was formed following the December 2022 Session Meeting.

The Session formed this Mission Study Committee to look at the unique mission of this particular local church in this particular time and place and to envision our near future. We want to discern who God is leading us to be and where God is leading us to go.

The members of the Committee are Kristen Ali, Rich Colvin, Sharon Griffith, Tom Martinson and Kevin Olandt, Chair.

A Mission Study boils down to a church looking:

Out the window (What's our mission field?) and

In the mirror (Who are we and what gifts has God given us for this time and place?)."

**Our goal is to come together as a congregation with an actionable vision for our near future - a real understanding of our place and our giftings, with real ministry priorities.**

This Mission Study is intended to assist our church as we transition from the 34 year long pastorate of Rev. John S. Sheldon. This Study will serve as a resource for prospective pastors to learn about us and our vision for the near future. In addition, the process has helped us come together to remember, reflect and set goals.

We thank all the people who participated in the surveys and Gatherings. Your input has made this Study possible. Thank you to the Deacons who took care of our Luncheon arrangements, thus freeing our team to focus on the substance of our discussions.

We submit this report in anticipation of God's Future work as he leads us. May we all desire "to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (1 Col. 1:10b)

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## **1- METHODOLOGY**

Our process included intentional prayer, study, fact-finding, reflection and discernment.

Team members were assigned various fact-finding tasks:

- Create a Church Timeline
- Survey Community Leaders
- Gather Demographics
- Create Bible Studies

Five Church-wide Gatherings were held on Sunday afternoons following a light lunch:

Gatherings were announced from the Pulpit and via e-mail. Sessions included various large and small group exercises.

Attendance averaged 45 people, including a number of regular attenders who are not members. Date and Topics as follows:

- 02/05/23 - Introduction
- 03/26/23 - Looking at the Past
- 03/12/23 - Looking at the PRESENT-Our Church and Our Denomination
- 04/02/23 - Looking to the FUTURE-Our Community, Our People, Our Vision
- 04/30/23 - Looking to the FUTURE-Scenarios, Goals & Objectives

Summary Of The Work Accomplished:

- Reviewed Our History With A Timeline And A Time For Recollection
- Surveyed The Congregation's Opinions On The Church
- Considered Our Strengths, Needs, And Weaknesses
- Considered Our Spiritual And Material Assets
- Considered The Mission Of Our Church
  - By Reviewing The Existing Mission Statement
  - By Reviewing The Meaning Of "Presbyterian" And "Confessional"
- Studied 1 Cor 12, And Phil 3:8-14
- Reviewed Denominational Beliefs And Actions
- Identified Concerns Of Our Members
- Reviewed Community Demographics And Opinions
- Formulated Draft Vision Statements
- Refined Vision Statements, Set Some Goals, And Considered Some Possible Scenarios For The Near Future

## **2 - WHO WE ARE**

### **Demographics**

#### History

- Ocean City, New Jersey was found in 1879 by four Methodist ministers as a Methodist Camp Meeting.
- 1st Pres OC was founded in 1896
- The current church building was built in 1906. Substantial additions were built in 1958 and 1972.
- Since its founding, 1st Pres OC has had 11 pastors. Pastor John Sheldon has been the Senior Pastor from 1989.
- On April 27, 2023 Session voted unanimously to request dismissal from the Presbytery for Southern New Jersey of the PCUSA denomination.
- On June 4, 2023 the Congregation approved the Dissolution of the Pastoral call with Pastor John Sheldon effective 7/31/23 due to His Desire to retire with his active duties ending June 11, 2023.
- See Appendix A for Church Timeline

#### Membership

- The membership in 1995 was 318 members.
- Our current membership is 83. The population is 53% female, with 68% over 55, 99% white.
- The Total 2022 Budget for all funds was \$426,360.69. Approximately 1/3 of the giving is from non-members.
- Our average Sunday morning Worship attendance is approximately 80.
- Approximately 20 non-members regularly worship with us.

#### Community

- Ocean City is a resort island community at the Jersey Shore with a population of approximately 11,000. In the Summer months, the population swells to 130,000 or more.
- Ocean City does not permit the sale of alcoholic beverages. The City's slogan is "America's Greatest Family Resort"
- Over the course of a Summer, more than a million people visit Ocean City.
- The area's demographics are not expected to change in the next 5 years
- The members and attendees of 1st Pres OC come from three distinct areas- about 40% live on the island, 20% come from mainland communities of Upper Township in Cape May County, and 40% come from mainland communities of Atlantic County (Egg Harbor Twp., Linwood and Somers Point).

## **2 - WHO WE ARE**

### **Congregational History**

The Mission Study team created a Congregational Timeline (See Appendix A) and asked members and friends to study it and add any missing items.

In our time of reflection on the Church's past, several themes came up.

Members most remembered the following Events and programs:

- VBS
- Kids programs
- Church picnic
- Choir Cantata

Significant observations:

- We have tended to have Pastors serve for long tenures.
- Many people noted that we have sent out many missionaries from our church
- Despite losing membership year after year, our budget was maintained.

Concerns brought up:

- Why did we lose the members we did and where did they go?
- We need to do a better job greeting new people and visitors.

## **2 - WHO WE ARE**

### **Strengths**

The members believe our strengths include a commitment to biblical preaching and teaching, strong support for Missions, a strong music program, and unity and brotherly love among the members. Other strengths include an active diaconate, expositional teaching, a commitment to Reformed theology, a requirement for membership and financial transparency.

### **Assets**

First Pres OC has numerous assets, both spiritual and material, to help her accomplish her mission.

Among the material assets is a large building with classrooms, a Fellowship Hall that includes a full kitchen; a parking lot; a convenient location, as well as two manses.

Other assets include an up to date sound system, projections system, Sanctuary lighting, Air Conditioning, an organ, pianos, security system, phone system, bibles and hymnals.

Our Future Fund is over \$600,000.

Our Spiritual Assets include:

- The people who share their spiritual gifts including Prayer Warriors, Faith Examples, Teachers, Musicians, Givers, as well as those who share in Hospitality and Bible Knowledge.
- Our Tradition of Financial Transparency, Expositional preaching, Reformed theology, and Sound Doctrine
- Lack of Conflict
- Good Leadership
- Staff - Experienced, committed Christians



## **2 - WHO WE ARE**

### **Weaknesses**

Many members feel that our congregation is not strong in Evangelism or Discipleship.

In recent history, the Church has had limited efforts in Evangelism; whether in outreach events or personal training. The occasional events have been attended by members and other Christians connected to the congregation, with almost no unchurched people attending.

We recognize that Discipleship and leadership development have not been pursued in an intentional way. Similarly, Examination and training of new Officers has become perfunctory.

Some members feel that transparency and communication from the leadership is lacking.

In common with many organizations, a small number of members does most of the work. We are not activating every member in ministry.

For many years our membership has declined numerically and increased in age. While this reflects community wide trends, it is not sustainable.

Financially, we have relied in recent years on large year-end gifts from two individuals. Almost 1/3rd of the giving is from non-members. For more than half of the year, our expenses exceed our income. Nevertheless, our annual budget is almost always fully funded to God's praise. Some members feel that this is not sustainable.

We note that some items were considered strengths by one group and weaknesses by another group. These include Prayer, Community Involvement, and Being Welcoming. This dichotomy highlights the different personal experiences of our people. A commitment to improving in these areas is incorporated into our Goals for the next five years (Section 4)

## **2 - WHO WE ARE**

### **Our relationship with the PCUSA denomination and Presbytery for Southern New Jersey**

Our 2/26/23 Gathering focused on our Mission Statement and the meaning of our commitment to be “Confessional”, “Reformed”, and “Presbyterian”

Through discussions, surveys and follow-up the Session determined that 97% of responding members desired to find a new denominational home. One respondent was unsure if we should leave the PCUSA. No respondents stated a desire to remain within the PCUSA.

### **Needs**

In response to our current status and our perceived weaknesses we identify the following primary needs:

- To Provide On-going Pastoral Leadership
- To Resolve Our Request for Dismissal from the Presbytery
- An Intentional corporate and Personal Outreach to Unbelievers
- New Members, especially young families
- Current members to Commit to Staying and sharing their Gifts
- Organized Opportunities for Prayer and Discipleship

### **Mission Statement**

When asked, most members were unaware of our Mission Statement (adopted in 2013)

However, when asked what is the purpose of our church, many of the points of our Mission Statement were included. (see Appendix **H**)

We recommend the Mission Statement be shared more widely, including with new members and leaders. In addition, the Session should regularly revisit the Statement to evaluate how we are meeting its goals and if it needs revision.

### **3 - WHO WE WANT TO BE**

#### **Vision Statement**

Visioning work was done at two successive Congregational Gatherings and through several Mission Study Team Meetings. The group studied the purpose of Vision Statements and studied examples from corporate America and other churches.

Most Appreciated Themes:      Evangelism  
   Feeding the Flock  
   Jesus is the Son of God

Our discussions showed a desire to emphasize Evangelism and Discipleship for the Future; perhaps because these are both currently perceived as weaknesses by many.

Most Appreciated Adjectives:      Loving  
   Welcoming  
   Faithful  
   Believing  
   Praying  
   Gracious

Proposed Vision Statement:

***To see our Church and our communities delighting in God, passionately following Jesus, and loving all people***

We believe this statement represents a number of our aspirations

- We desire to be witnesses preaching the gospel to all our neighbors knowing that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace.
- We use the plural- "communities" - recognizing that our target membership comes from a number of geographic areas within a 20 minute drive from the Campus.
- We focus on the Church first, knowing that we must continue to "preach the Gospel to ourselves" as we practice discipleship in the goal of becoming mature in Christ
- We look to our beloved Westminster Shorter Catechism first Question for a summary of our eternal purpose to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever" - this is our personal desire and our desire for all unbelievers
- We desire to never lose our first love, to be always reminded of the glory of our Savior Jesus
- We desire to be continuously renewed by the transforming of our mind.
- We desire to be loving and gracious to all people regardless of race, gender, class, politics, disability, etc. in order to show forth the love of God, knowing that all people are created in God's image.

### **3 - WHO WE WANT TO BE**

#### **Goals for the Next 5 Years**

Our Final Congregational Gathering spent time in both small groups and large group discussion setting some goals for the next five years.

#### **Priority Goals (Next 12-24 months)**

- Conclude Dismissal From Presbytery And Enter A New Denomination
- Call A New Pastor

Following are six actionable goals generated by the Congregation and adopted by the Session. We believe this goals are Specific, Actionable and Measurable:

#### **DISCIPLESHIP:**

- **Start Small Group Ministry and Regular Prayer Meetings:** Perhaps a monthly Small group ministry around Sunday Fellowship Lunch and Prayer
- **Create a leadership development Program:** Identify/seek out individuals for training

#### **EVANGELISM**

- **Attract Two new families each year.**
- **Plan Two Evangelism Events each Year-** Movie nights, coffee houses, Caroling in the Park, etc. These events could be in cooperation with other churches
- **Develop Evangelism Ministries to unserved/at need groups:** Perhaps surfers, or 11-13 year olds...
- **Grow membership by 20% in 2 years thru intentional evangelism, personal invitation and Prayer:** 82 members x 20% = 17 members

We present these goals knowing that others will need to establish more detailed objectives and implantation strategies.

## **4 - GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR NEW PASTOR:**

Our previous pastor served for over 34 years. Consequently, we appreciate his strengths but also recognize his weaknesses as we seek to discern what is best for us in a new Pastor.

We seek a Pastor who will share our vision for a Gospel centered revival of our church and community.

**Education:** Doctor or Master of Divinity from an ATS accredited seminary

**Expositional Preaching:**

After having two long-serving pastors who upheld the inerrancy of Scripture and practiced expositional preaching and teaching, our congregation appreciates the benefits of both. Our new Pastor must hold to biblical inerrancy and is expected to typically preach expositionally.

**Reformed Theology:** We strongly believe that belief precedes practice. Our new Pastor must be rooted in and conforming to Reformed Theology as expressed in the Westminster Standards.

**Experience:** A devoted follower of Jesus Christ. 4 to 10 years experience in Pastoral ministry is desired.

**Character:** A compassionate and outgoing personality with a heart for evangelism. Morally upright. Patient and humble.

**Abilities:** Strong expositional preaching. Able to teach biblical principles. Willing to gently correct error and sin.

**Vision Casting:** We look to our new Pastor to help us develop this Mission Study into tangible ministry, especially in Discipleship and Evangelism.

**Collaboration:** We believe the Holy Spirit has endowed our local church with every spiritual gift we need (1 Cor. 12). The Pastor should not feel responsible for running all programs. Our new Pastor should be able to delegate tasks and help identify and work with individual's gifts for the common good.

First Presbyterian Church of Ocean City, NJ History

Pastor	Date	Active Members	Worship Attendance	Worship/Staff	Total Budgets	Current Fund Actual	Missions Fund Actual	Building Fund Actual	Building Projects	Programs	World/Culture	Denomination
John Sheldon	2022	88	88 14*		\$507,923	\$401,422	\$93,585	\$57,793	1st floor Mens rm Parking Lot re-coated	Bible Recap Resume Rally Day	Ukraine War Roe v.Wade Overturnd	
	2021	111	84 21*	Ryan Colvin-Ministry Intern	\$473,790	\$376,307	\$72,061	\$132,612	Paint Fellowship Hall and Kitchen, kit. clg Roof repairs, sound bd	Elders Tending the Sheep Praise in the Pkg Lot		
	2020	112	70 38*	Virtual Worship from 3/22 thru 6/14 End Sun PM Worship SS restarts 11/1	\$477,249	\$355,274	\$72,200	\$27,033	Boiler wall repair Panic bars at towers Live stream A/V equip w/ Presbytery Grant Drum Room	Virtual VBS Weekly Pastors Update e-mailed Prayer List	Covid-19 George Floyd riots	West Jersey Presbytery combined with Monmouth to form Presbytery for Southern NJ
	2019	110	112	Session to 7 Cong Mtg requires 20% Quorum	\$440,410	\$351,286	\$72,440	\$40,374	Masonry Repairs Security System	Women of Faith OC Operating Manual WSC Agreement		FPC becomes supporting member of Alliance of Confessing Evangelical
	2018	133	120	Johnny Sheldon, Youth Ministry Intern	\$454,890	\$343,204	\$73,225	\$63,767		In House Retreat	SCOTUS Same Sex Marriage	
	2017	142	132	Deacons to 9 Blended Worship Kim Murphy-Music R Tobias-Organ/Choir Dan Ahmad-Tech O Murphy-Bells, Jr Choir	\$447,806	\$326,673	\$84,499	\$27,776	New A/V system w/TV's	Family Promise		
	2016	142	129	No PastorVisitation Reduced Session Committees Lydia Sheldon sent	\$458,097	\$354,842	\$81,770	\$90,517		Spruce Lake Retreat-32		
	2015	144	139		\$501,016	\$367,572	\$81,362	\$105,044		Spruce Lake Retreat-58		Same Sex Marriage ECO denomination Forms
	2014	161	155	Bekka Olandt sent	\$487,436	\$409,807	\$87,158	\$38,865	New Sound System Parking Lot rebuilt Grant from NJ Hist. Trust Library Removed	Pastor 25th Anniversary Kim Murphy 15th Anniv. Spruce Lake Retreat-56 Junior Choir, After Worship refreshments		
	2013	178	163	Session to 9	\$507,650	\$364,854	\$87,970	\$282,605	Sandy Reconstruction Completed	Spruce Lake Retreat-46		Gay Ordination passes
	2012	198	168	JoAnne Blackwelder-Music Dir/Organist Rev. Dan Unrath-Pastor of Visitation	\$447,536	\$328,117	\$84,839	\$113,434	Sandy Reconstruction Fellowship Hall, Kitchen and Main Entry Prayer Rm dedicated Manse Repairs	Mission Statement Spruce Lake Retreat-46	Superstorm Sandy	
	2011	197	175	Rev R. Sullivan - Pastor of Visitation	\$429,896	\$341,507	\$86,010	\$42,421		New Website Summer Small Groups	Occupy Movement Arab Spring	
	2010	202	184	Pr. Bob Dies Dave Seals- Music D. MacPherson-Organ	\$439,786	\$338,224	\$76,804	\$29,511			Haiti Quake New Orleans Mission Trip	
	2009	213	185	Bob Dye- Music	\$437,309	\$357,941	\$75,150	\$35,296				
	2008	223	198		\$482,801	\$334,159	\$83,421	\$88,870		Brazil Mission Trip	Great Recession	Pr John is GA commissioner
	2007				\$429,000					Time & Talent Fair	Missionary Prayer Brochure	
	2006	277	197		\$421,105					Walk Thru the Bible New Orleans Mission Trip	Missionary Posters	New trinity language Ordination stds-local abortion can be moral
	2005	284	207	Debbie MacPherson-Bell Director	\$405,035						Hurricane Katrina	
	2004	279	230	Praise Team 1/month	\$435,638				\$29k in Repairs	Future Ministry Fund		
	2003	295	227	Jan Young-Bells	\$406,654	\$293,224	\$68,946	\$60,017	\$44k in Repairs	Avokya NT-Pastor -Africa Change to M&E Zone Leaders ESV pew bibles Adopt a Child in Prayer Nat'l Day of Prayer Mtg	US invades Iraq	

	2002								1st Sandy Cove Womens Retreat		FPC joins Confessing Church Movement
	2001				\$363,900				Seniors Ministry	9/11 Attacks - US invades Aghanistan	
	2000	268	237	Session to 12	\$346,300						
	1999	259		Kim Murphy- Part Time Youth Min. Bell Choirs/Orchestra	\$298,500			7th Street Manse- Vote to Keep & Repair	Kids Club Food Card Distribution Monthly Hymn Sings		FPC files complaint against Presbytery
	1998			Mark Brooks leaves	\$298,500						
	1997	278		Lois Likens-music SS Opening begins	\$293,800				Wednesday Night Dinners Jr Choir Restarts Parish Nurse		
	1996	309		Charlie Paul-music	\$354,952			SS Reconfigured	2 small groups Youth Prayer Team		
	1995	318		Mark Brooks-Youth Bob Dye-Music Cherie Stauffer sent	\$358,850			New Sound System	Millie Dienert Seminar 5 small groups Mothers Fellowship begins		
	1994	301		Rev Bob McKay Pastor of Visitation	\$298,500			Manse Repairs	Lion Tamers Spares & Pairs restarts		FPC withholds per capita to GA, Synod
	1993	295			\$426,434	\$190,092	\$50,875	\$82,789	Tower Repair \$190kdebt Sanctuary paint, carpet	Lay renewal Weekend	Relmaginging Conf.
	1992			Bob Dye-Music	\$257,359				Pioneers Club Billy Graham Crusade Toymakers Dream		GA ambiguous abortion statement
	1991										
John Sheldon-1989	1990			Rev Hibbitt-Pastor of Visitation						Gulf War	
Ralph Hibbitt- Interim	1987									'89 Berlin Wall Falls	1988- PCUSA Stated clerk files pro-abortion brief
	1983			Rev Jeff Winters Associate Pastor							Merger forms PCUSA
	1980										'81-EPC formed '82-Property Trust clause
	1975									End of Vietnam War	
	1972			'64 Handbells				Wesley Ave Manse 2nd Floor and Sanctuary Renovation		Roe v. Wade Decision	'67-Book of Confessions '73-PCA formed
	1958							Education Wing		'62- Nor'easter	'56-Women Ministers '58-UPCUSA merger
William Allen-'56-'87	1956									'50-53 Korean War	
	1945									'45 Atomic Bomb '44 Hurricane	
George Fischer '39-'56	1939							7th Street Manse		World War II	
	1936										OPC Denomination
William LaSor '34-'38	1934									'33 Prohibition Ends	
Charles Veogelin '22-'33	1929									'29-Great Depression '29- Gillians Fun Deck '27- OC Great Fire	Women Elders
	1921									'23 Flanders Hotel '20 Prohibition begins '20 Women can vote	'24 Auburn Affirmation Essential Tenets removed
Reuben Snyder	1918									World War I	
Charles Bohner '12-'18	1912									-15 City Hall built	
	1906							Church Building			Women Deacons
Harvey Casselbaum	1904										
A.W. Williams	1900									US Pres Assassinated	
J MacMillan-Supply	1898										
John Higgins	1897										
Church Organized	1896										

Racial - Ethnic Trends	2022	2027	FPC 2022
Asian	5.91%	5.78%	0.00%
Black - African American	9.71%	9.49%	1.13%
White	66.73%	66.84%	98.87%
Hispanic / Latino	15.34%	15.52%	0.00%
Other	2.31%	2.37%	0.00%

Age Trends	2022	2027	FPC 2022
0 - 4	5.4%	5.6%	0.0%
5 - 17	14.2%	14.1%	3.4%
18 - 24	8.6%	7.9%	11.5%
25 - 34	12.5%	12.9%	8.0%
35 - 54	21.2%	20.8%	3.4%
55 - 64	15.0%	13.2%	19.5%
65 and Over	23.1%	25.6%	54.2%

### Household and Children Trends

Children Under 18	2022	2027
Married Couple	72.4%	72.5%
Single Parent	27.6%	27.5%

### Marital Status Trends

Population by Status (Age 15+)	2022	2027
Never Married	30.6%	31.8%
Married	48.9%	48.0%
Divorced	10.7%	10.6%
Separated	2.2%	2.0%
Widowed	7.6%	7.6%

Beliefs About Jesus	Agreement
People in the church do not behave as Jesus would	Very Strong
Belief in Jesus does not require participation in a church	Very Strong
Jesus was both divine and human	Strong Agreement
Jesus actually rose from the dead as Bible teaches	Strong Agreement
Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah	Strong Agreement
Jesus rules now & always as Lord of heaven & earth	Somewhat Strong
I have a personal relationship with Jesus	Somewhat Strong
Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life while on earth	Neutral
Jesus is the only way for human salvation from sin	Neutral
Jesus was a good & wise moral teacher but no more	Weak Agreement
Jesus was a great prophet only	Very Weak

### Reasons to NOT Participate in a Religious Congregation

Those OUTSIDE a Religious Congregation

Concern	Reason
Religious People too Judgemental	Strong Reason
Religion too focused on money	Strong Reason
Disillusionment with religion	Strong Reason
Don't trust organized religion	Strong Reason
Don't trust religious leaders	Somewhat Strong

Those INSIDE a Religious Congregation

Concern	Reason
Don't believe in God	Very Strong Reason
Didn't feel welcome	Strong Reason
Wasn't supportive during crisis/time of need	Strong Reason
Demands of raising children	Strong Reason
Too progressive/ moving from traditional values	Strong Reason



## First Presbyterian Church Confidential Congregational Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_(Optional)

1. How long have you attended our Church? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What do you enjoy most about attending services here?

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3. Are you a member of FPC? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How far do you travel to attend our church? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Where do you travel from? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Briefly describe your understanding of the mission of our church?

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Please list any comments or concerns on the reverse side of this survey.

February 5, 2023

# First Presbyterian Church

## Confidential Congregational Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (Optional)

1. From the list below please check all those reasons that best match your reasons for coming and staying at our church.

What originally attracted you to attend this congregation?		What is the reason you remain part of this congregation?
	The Minister	
	My friends are here	
	The church's reputation	
	Adult education program	
	Child and youth program	
	The music program	
	The social outreach	
	The worship style	
	The self-help groups	
	A Presbyterian Church	

2. From the list below please check all those areas where you currently participate in our church life.

Bible Studies	
Choir	
Committees	
Wednesday Night Dinner / Study	
Sunday School	
Women's Programs	

Please list any comments or concerns on the reverse side of this survey.  
Do not include the same comments/concerns you listed on the last survey.

February 26, 2023

## 'One Anothers' in Scripture (ESV)

**Love One Another**

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 15:12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

John 15:17 "These things I command you, so that you will love one another"

Romans 12:10 "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."

Romans 13:8 "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law."

1 Thessalonians 3:12 "...and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you."

1 Thessalonians 4:9 "Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another."

2 Thessalonians 1:3 "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing."

1 Peter 1:22 "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart."

1 Peter 4:8 "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."

1 John 3:11 "For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

1 John 3:23 "And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us."

1 John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."

1 John 4:11 "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

2 John 1:5 "And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another."

**Out Do One Another in Showing Honor**

Romans 12:10 "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."

1 Corinthians 11:33 "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another."

**Live in Harmony with One Another**

Romans 12:16 "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight."

Romans 15:5 "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus."

2 Corinthians 13:11 "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."

**Don't Pass Judgment on One Another**

Romans 14:13 "Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother."

**Welcome/Greet One Another**

Romans 15:7 "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Romans 16:16 "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you."

1 Corinthians 16:20 "All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss."

2 Corinthians 13:12 "Greet one another with a holy kiss."

1 Peter 5:14 "Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ."

**Avoid Lawsuits with One Another**

1 Corinthians 6:7 "To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?"

**Husbands and Wives**

1 Corinthians 7:5 "Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

**Care for One Another**

1 Corinthians 12:25 "...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."

**Comfort One Another**

2 Corinthians 13:11 "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."

### **Serve One Another**

Galatians 5:13 "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

### **Don't Bite and Devour and Be Consumed By One Another**

Galatians 5:15 "But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."

### **Don't Provoke One Another**

Galatians 5:26 "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

### **Don't Envy One Another**

Galatians 5:26 "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

### **Bear with One Another in Love**

Ephesians 4:2 "...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love..."

Colossians 3:13 "...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

### **Be Kind to One Another**

Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

### **Forgive One Another**

Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Colossians 3:13 "...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

### **Address One Another in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs**

Ephesians 5:19 "...addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart."

### **Submit to One Another**

Ephesians 5:21 "...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

### **Don't Lie to One Another**

Colossians 3:9 "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices."

### **Admonish One Another**

Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

### **Encourage One Another**

1 Thessalonians 4:18 "Therefore encourage one another with these words."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

Hebrews 10:25 "...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

### **Build One Another Up**

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

### **Exhort One Another**

Hebrews 3:13 "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

### **Stir Up One Another**

Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."

### **Do Not Speak Evil of One Another**

James 4:11 "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge."

### **Do Not Grumble Against One Another**

James 5:9 "Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door."

### **Confess Your Sins to One Another**

James 5:16 "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

### **Pray for One Another**

James 5:16 "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

### **Show Hospitality to One Another**

1 Peter 4:9 "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling."

### **Cloth Yourselves with Humility towards One Another**

1 Peter 5:5 "Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"

# EXISTING PROGRAMS

## Worship:

- Sunday 10:30 AM
- Choir
- Praise & Worship Team

## Education:

- 9:00 AM Sunday School

## Children:

- VBS
- Kids Club
- Children's Church

## Session:

- Membership/Evangelism
- Christian Ed/Worship
- Missions
- Finance

## Youth

- Wed Night Study
- Monthly Activities
- Ferry/Bike Trip
- Summer Canoe Trip

## Fellowship:

Wed Night Dinner  
After Worship Refreshment  
Christmas Banquet  
Annual Picnic & Camping

## Study:

Wed Night Bible Study  
Womens Bible Studies  
Women's Programs

## Prayer:

Tuesday Prayer  
National Day of Prayer

## Deacons

- Visitation
- Cards/ Calls
- Assistance w/Food, Housing, Transport
- Family Promise (Assist Homeless Families)

## Community:

- Boy Scouts
- NA Leaders
- Westminster Christian Academy

## Outreach:

- Wed Card Program-Monthly

## Hospitality

- Out of Town Groups

- What Is Missing?
- What Needs Improvement?
- What Is Working Well?
- What Should Be Removed?

# MEMBER FEEDBACK

## Membership

- Despite Losing Membership Year After Year, our Budget Was Maintained.

## Missionaries:

- We Have Sent out a Lot of Missionaries in our Church

## Events and Programs Most Remembered:

- VBS
- Kids Programs
- Church Picnic
- Choir Cantata

## 1 Cor. 12 Bible Study Main Points:

- The Body of the Church Needs To Work Together.
- We Must Use our Gifts in Love
- We Must Use Gifts for the Glory of God

## Concerns Brought Up:

- Why Did We Lose the Members We Did and Where Did They Go?
- Need To Do a Better Job Greeting New People and Visitors.
- Need To Disaffiliate With the PC(USA)
- Lack of Evangelism
- Age of Congregation
- Diminishing Membership

APRIL 30, 2023

# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

## ASSETS:

- Appreciation for the Small Town Community of Ocean City
- Safe, Generous, Coming Together in Crisis, Community of Ocean City
- The Ocean

## CHANGES:

- Prices Increasing, Affecting all, and Making It Difficult for Young Families To Move Here
- Changing Population – Different Times of the Year
- Children – Lots of Special Needs, Children Are Behind
- Seasonal Months Much More Active Here
- People Are More Isolated

## NEEDS:

- Help for Senior Citizens Living Alone
- More Activities and Safe Places for Children and Youth To Gather
- Connect the People Who Have a Lot With Those Who Need Help – Financial and Emotional Needs
- Help for Homeless People's Needs
- Churches To Help Others, To Connect With the Youth, To Draw Young People and Young Parents Back
- Empathy!

# STRENGTHS

## Strengths

- United
- Mission Support
- Family/Love for One Another
- Music
- Expectations on the LORD
- Service
- Faithfulness
- History
- Small Size
- Strong Leaders
- Accessibility
- Location
- Belief in Biblical Inerrancy
- **Expositional Preaching/Teaching**
- Good Theology (Redemptive Historical)
- Good Polity
- Brotherly Love
- Deacon's Service
- Proper Administration of Sacraments
- Membership Required
- Financial Transparency

## Spiritual Assets

People

- Faith Examples
- Prayer Warriors
- Teachers
- Musicians
- Bible Knowledge
- Tithers/Givers

Pastoral Leadership  
Elder Leadership  
Lack of Conflict  
**Welcoming** Fellowship/Community  
Faith/Trust  
**Expositional Preaching**  
Sound Doctrine  
**Tradition**

## NEEDS

- Members
- Identify our Mission
- A New Pastor
- Member Commitment To Stay Thru Pastoral Transition
- Young Families
- A New Denomination
- Prayer
- Education for Congregation
- Organized Discipleship

## Material Assets

Church Building w/ A/C  
Sound System, Drum Room,  
Organ And Pianos  
Classrooms and Gym  
Commercial Kitchen and Hall  
9 Toilet Rooms  
Offices w/Computers and Phones  
Choir Room  
Security System  
Parking Lot  
2 Manses, 3 Garages  
Extra Lot  
\$600,000+ Future Fund  
Bibles and Hymnals

## **WEAKNESSES**

- Older
- Prayer
- Community Involvement
- Member Involvement
- Communication/Connection
- Transparency
- Elder Communication/Visiting
- Elder Training
- Mostly White
- Evangelism (Corporate & Personal)
- Not Welcoming**



## Looking at the PRESENT

### Our Church and Our Denomination

# MISSION

### 2/05/23 Survey Responses:

Briefly describe your understanding of the mission of our church:

- Preach God's word / Teach the gospel
- Love God, Love and serve others
- Christian outreach / Great Commission
- Equip Christians to glorify God and witness for Him
- Benefit to community
- Read and follow the Bible
- Grow and disciple believers / Build up the body
- Be evangelical



### 2013 MISSION STATEMENT

"Loving the LORD, Loving Each Other, Loving the Lost"

#### Who We Are:

"First Presbyterian is a biblical, confessional, Reformed congregation committed to the **Good News** of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible (the Word of God). We are called to glorify the Triune God and enjoy Him forever."

#### What We Do:

Our purpose is:

#### 1. To equip the saints for the work of ministry for the building up of the body.

- Through expositional preaching and teaching of the historic Reformed faith
- Promoting the unity of this faith among our members
- Maintaining divine worship and proper administration of the sacraments
- Encouraging the regular practice of corporate and individual prayer
- Teaching the love of God and neighbor by intentional thought, word, and actions
- Encouraging marriage and formation of covenant families marked by godly nurture and admonition
- Sharing our lives with one another in fellowship, burden bearing and promoting accountability to each other
- Identifying and encouraging our spiritual gifts
- Declaring the gospel to one another

#### 2. To witness and serve in Ocean City and the surrounding communities.

- Renewing the community around us through Gospel centered living
- Caring for the poor, sick, and those who live alone without support
- Providing meeting space for community organizations
- Cooperating with Christian organizations who come to the Jersey shore for ministry and renewal
- Participate with other churches and local ministries in community outreaches and services
- Sending out our members to share the Gospel in their professional and social relationships.

#### 3. To proclaim the Gospel in all the world.

- Through prayer and financial support of local and foreign missions
- Forming personal relationships with missionaries we support
- Encouraging and sending members to serve in cross-cultural missions



# PRESBYTERIAN

- Distinct in Theology and Church Government
- **Church Government**
  - Rule by Elders (Greek- *presbyteros*)
  - Connected to other churches (Presbyteries, Synods, General Assembly)
- **Reformed Theology**
  - Sovereignty of God
  - Depravity of Mankind
  - Unconditional Election
  - Covenant Baptism
  - Holy Living
- Origins in the Church of Scotland and Scottish Reformation which was strongly influenced by John Calvin and the French/Swiss Reformation
- Named “Presbyterian” when churches were organized in England which had its own established Church of England

# CONFESSSIONAL

- **Early Church Creeds:** 6 councils hammered out basic Christian doctrine and condemned numerous heresies.
  - One product: the Nicene Creed, a brief statement of essential points.
  - Council Of Chalcedon (487 AD) defined the two natures of Christ. The representatives agreed there would be no new Creeds.
- **To Confess** is to openly Proclaim
- **Confessions** are declarations of the basic beliefs of a Denomination
  - These serve to unite the believers in faith and practice
  - They serve as guiderails to limit private interpretations of Scripture
- 1567- Church of Scotland adopts the **Scots Confession** as its sole doctrinal standard
- 1647- Church of Scotland adopts the **Westminster Confession of Faith** as its sole doctrinal standard along with a Larger and Shorter Catechism
  - 1788- Presbyterian Church in the United States modifies the Westminster Confession primarily to remove royal authority
  - 1903- Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A adds two chapters to woo Arminians:
    - Ch. 34 Of the Holy Spirit
    - Ch. 35 Of the Gospel of the Love of God and Missions
  - 1967 Merger of two Northern Presbyterian Churches creates a new Confession of 1967
  - 1983 Merger creates a Book of Confessions, abandoning the Westminster Confessions as its sole doctrinal standard

# Our Denomination

## Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)

Last Heresy Trial was 1969

- **Origin:** 1983 Merger between the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A and the Presbyterian Church in the United States - approx. 4,000,000 members
  - **Current Membership:** 1,193,770 Members at end of 2021
  - **Churches:** 8,813 congregations at end of 2021
- **Our Presbytery:** Presbytery for Southern New Jersey
  - 2021 Merger of Monmouth and West Jersey Presbyteries
  - 57 Churches

### Essential Tenets of 1923

Inerrancy of Scripture  
The Virgin Birth  
Sacrificial Atonement  
Bodily Resurrection  
Christ’s Miracles

### Other Issues

Authority of Scripture  
The Trinity  
Divinity of Christ  
The Incarnation  
Christ Alone

### Social Issues

Abortion  
Divorce  
Homosexuality  
Same Sex Marriage  
Transgenderism

### Westminster Confession

Yes (1.5)  
Yes (8.2)  
Yes (8.5, 11.3))  
Yes (8.4)  
Yes (1.5)

Final Authority (1.1, 4)  
Yes (2.3)  
Yes (8.2)  
Yes (8.2)  
Yes (10.4)

### PCUSA Current Practice

No  
Dissenters Tolerated  
Dissenters Tolerated  
Dissenters Tolerated  
Dissenters Tolerated

A Guide  
Dissenters Tolerated  
Dissenters Tolerated  
Dissenters Tolerated  
Other Ways Possible

Should Be Unrestricted  
No Fault Divorce and Remarriage  
Not Sin  
Endorsed  
Not Sin

## PCUSA 2022 General Assembly

### Abortion

**HSB-11** affirms that women and pregnant people are full moral agents, ... and it supports their moral capacity to decide whether to continue or end any given pregnancy. Denounces attempts to prevent people from receiving abortion care. (Approved 348-38)

**Book of Confessions:** The Church will form a committee to write a new PC(USA) confession.

**LGBTQIA+ Equity.** The assembly created a **new LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee** as a permanent committee of the General Assembly

### Israel/Palestine

**INT-02** “recognizes that the laws, policies, and practices of the government of Israel regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid.” (Approved 266-116)

### Fossil Fuel Divestment

**ENV-10** calls for divestment from five oil and gas companies. The assembly said the companies were not doing enough to slow global warming. (340-41)

### Immigration

**IMM-06**, allows the church to declare itself a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church.” that supports and encourages its congregations, mid councils, and members to support immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their children, and to resist efforts by the government to separate families. (Approved 340-25)

### Gun Violence

General Assembly approved a motion that the church renew its commitment to end gun violence by developing a 10-year campaign, the Decade to End Gun Violence (2022 – 2032).

**Racial Justice:** **RGJ-08:** “On Offering an Apology to African Americans for the Sin of Slavery and Its Legacy.” White Presbyterians read aloud “A Litany of Repentance” found in RGJ-08, which begins with the words: “As white Christians we repent of our complicity in the belief in white supremacy.”

# FUTURE SCENARIOS

## 1. Gracious Dismissal from PCUSA

- Presbytery is Gracious. Process is smooth and takes 6 to 12 months. Property is Maintained.
- New Denomination helps us Find a New Pastor. Slowly rebuild membership and Improve Outreach to the Lost

## 2. Bitter Dismissal from PCUSA - Dissolution

- Presbytery is Adversarial. Two Year or Longer Process. Property is Lost.
- Mass Exodus of Members. Finances collapse. Unable to find a new pastor. Remnant votes to dissolve the Congregation.

## 3. Bitter Dismissal from PCUSA - Rebound

- Presbytery is Adversarial. Two Year or Longer Process. Property is Lost.
- Congregation Relocates. New Denomination helps us Find a New Pastor Quickly. Influx of New Believers.