

Eyes on Christ: *Envisioning Our Future*



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Pastor Dan Snyder

Pastor to People: *FPC at Its Best*

“in the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18).

You probably never thought of yourself as a prophet. But as one in whom the Spirit of God dwells and in whom God delights, you are!

Sandra Hack Polaski says: While the common understanding of prophecy tends toward the notion of telling the future, in the biblical record the prophet is not so much one who foretells coming events as one who interprets current events, who makes the present times meaningful, including . . . how the present is likely to unfold into the future.

The people at the day of Pentecost (to whom the Apostle Peter preached the aforementioned words) heard “about God’s deeds and power” in their own heart languages. In this way the first church is created and assembled. We can imagine people inspired and drawn to the adventurous work of God by specific descriptions of God’s deeds. And as this new community came together, people celebrated and got to work with others from widely diverse backgrounds. They heard and told about a mission that grabbed their attention - in their own heart language.

First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster is a place where God is at work. As the Holy Spirit brings you into this ministry there are special works of God that have captured your heart’s attention because you have ‘heard them in your own language.’ You have stories of what has made you want to belong here. Precious stories of work done with God and God’s people. Powerful stories of events that made a difference in your life as you saw the impact our church was making on the world. Tender stories of how God and God’s people became a place for your healing and wholeness. Happy stories of exciting things we accomplished together with God’s help - things you could never have done alone. Even sad stories about losses when you discovered that what was valuable to you was also valuable to God.

These stories make us a church. They teach us what makes us special and unique, called to together to be a particular people of God. Together, these stories are the north-star that keeps us aimed at our future. With your stories - the ones about the times you were most drawn to our church hearing about God’s deeds and power in your own heart’s language - we gain a valuable piece of our identity. Without your stories we will move forward, but off the path that drew us together.

The Session of our church has made several wise decisions in recent months. They decided to stabilize things by putting a familiar face in pastoral leadership. They also decided to increase Laura Sambrick to full-time employment to assist with pastoral care. They approved the hiring of Katie Kindig and Derek Siewert to give direction to our Family Ministries. They empowered our Trustees and Gratitude Team to find creative ways to fund our budget. They continue to support and focus our local and international mission efforts. And they have encouraged us to keep our “eyes on Christ,” the true Head of this Church.

Now they have made the decision to invite you to participate in a historical vision process. This publication outlines ways for you to participate in sharing what is most important to you about our church. I would ask that you read it carefully and pay attention over the next several months so that you don't miss out on this opportunity. Only 100% participation from those who call FPC their church can successfully clarify the kind of church we can become in the next few years. If, as you read this publication, you find that you cannot participate as planned, please speak up and let us know a way that will work for you to share your thoughts.

To those who are long-time, faithful members: Many of you who have been with us for decades will ask “haven't we done this before?” Yes we have - 15 years ago. Vision work is an important enough practice to revisit. I want to remind you of how important it is for the leaders to hear again what has kept you faithfully committed to FPC through all the challenges. And I want you to remember that the last time we did this work thoroughly, our youth were not yet born, our young adults were small children. And 15 years ago, dozens of people have joined FPC whose voices and stories need to be heard. I'm certain these stories will support the work you have built.

To those who have been away: Some of you have stopped attending and worshipping at FPC for a wide variety of reasons. And some of those reasons may no longer be relevant. You might ask “if I haven't been a faithful member, will they really want to hear what I have to say?” Yes we do. At one point something drew you to this church and keeps you interested. There may be something you've always wondered about the church that needs to be heard. There may be something you think we should start or stop doing that needs to be pointed out. Know that your voice and stories are vitally important to helping us get this right. And, of course, we'd love for you to come back home. There's always a place for you at FPC.

First Presbyterian Church will be hiring a new pastoral staff team within the next several months. This is an important decision in the life of any congregation. No pastor feels attracted to a church that can't decide what mission to pursue. A church like that has no future because new members are not attracted to a church that doesn't know its mission. The great pastors I know feel called to churches that know who they are and where they are going. And a church that is alive with the Holy Spirit, like First Presbyterian, has much to talk about. We have a lot of stories to collect and a lot of Good News to tell.



Clarifying Our Path Forward

First Presbyterian is undertaking a process over the next few months that will clarify our vision for the future of our ministry and identify the kind of pastor, or pastoral team, we need to lead us. Envisioning our Future is a vision process endorsed by Session and pastor Dan Snyder (see his *Pastor to People* column), and it will work best with full participation by the congregation.

Fundamentally, it is a congregational self-study that will yield two main results:

- A Congregational Profile that accurately describes our church; its history, current reality, and future orientation
- A Pastoral Profile that broadly describes the type of pastor we believe God intends to lead us into the next season of life as a church

“We are looking for the congregation's overall sense of God's vision for First Presbyterian,” notes Bill Owen, the consultant working with FPC from the Center for Healthy Churches. “It is about identifying, through this church-wide conversation, the congregation's clear, compelling call. It is about moving beyond personal preferences to a shared vision for who you can be, given your history, your resources and your call.”

Owen is working directly with Session, Pastor Snyder, and a leadership team selected by Pastor Snyder and Session to represent a cross-section of the congregation. The leadership team will plan and facilitate, with Owen's guidance, a series of three large-scale conversations – one each on the church's past, present and future – all meant to include the *entire* congregation. (See related articles on Bill Owen and the Center for Healthy Churches and also the Envisioning our Future leadership team and its hopes and expectations). Dates for these 90-minute congregational gatherings have been set as follows: September 29, October 20 and November 10. All are Sundays. More information about each one will be communicated, along with alternative ways to participate for those who cannot be present.

In each gathering, congregants will be divided into small groups with conversation facilitated by a team leader, with the overall event directed by Owen. These groups will use a strengths-based approach to visioning known as appreciative inquiry, which is a way to “recognize God's unique blessings in this church, to uncover what the congregation values most ... and to envision what could be,” according to Owen.

Adds Pastor Snyder, “We will not ignore weaknesses or problems, but we will focus on the best of the church and how to live out our best into the future. We'll ask questions like:

- “When have you felt like our church was at our best?”
- “When have you contributed most to the mission and health of the church?”
- “What are the best, most important features of this church?”
- “What would it be like to see God make the best things about our church the focal points of our future?”

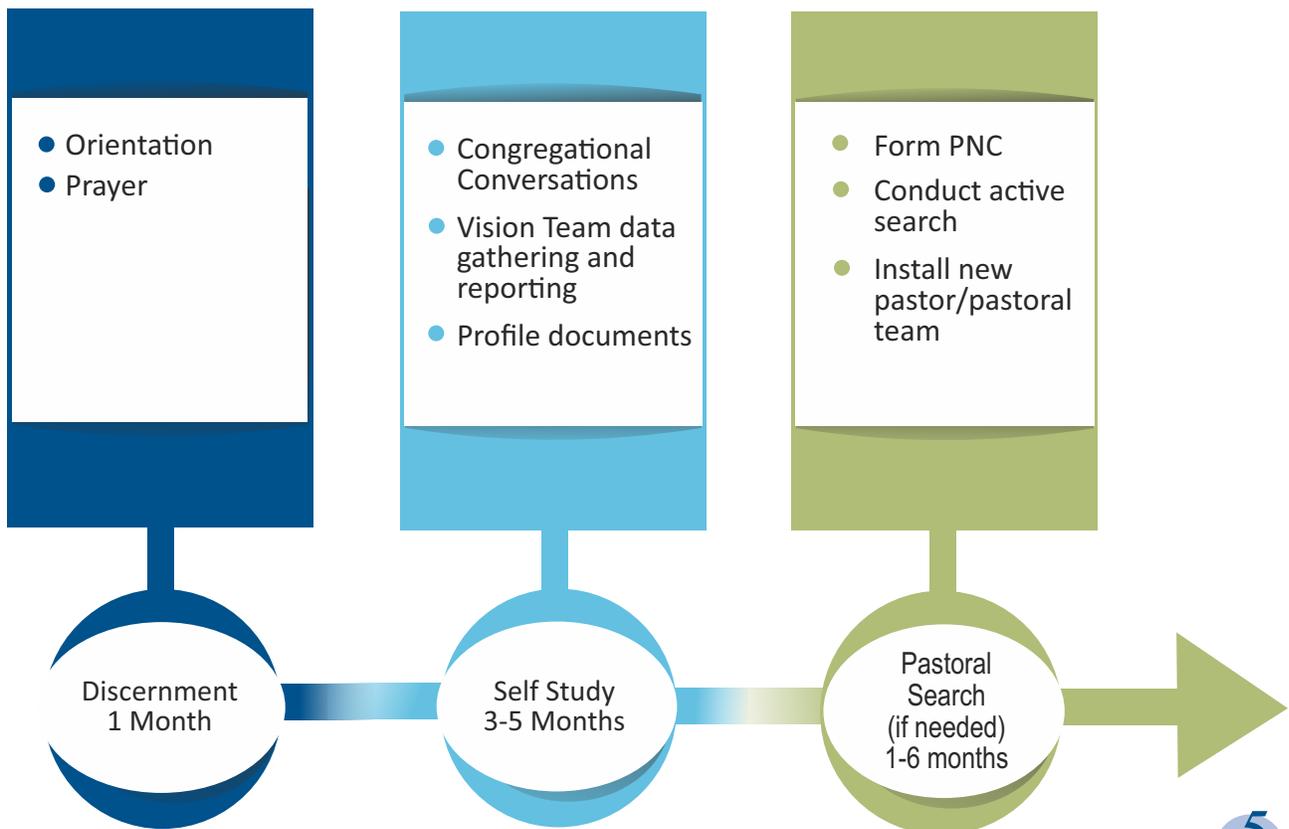
Another way to think of it is this: A traditional organizational development process asks, *what problems are you having* and seeks to fix what is broken; the appreciative inquiry process asks, *what is working well around here* and looks to amplify that.

After facilitating these conversations, members of the Envisioning our Future leader team will collect all of the responses and enter them into a common data file so that patterns and priorities can be seen, documented and reported. As the data indicates, this team will also study relevant church metrics and may also gather mission-related Lancaster community information. All of this will lead to recommendations for action along with the Congregational and Pastoral profiles, noted above, that will guide the congregation over the next several years.

Concerning our pastoral transition, the Pastoral Profile will guide Session in deciding whether or not to recommend that Pastor Snyder become our installed lead pastor, just as the Congregational Profile will guide Pastor Snyder in deciding whether or not to accept a call to become our installed lead Pastor. If and when it becomes clear that Pastor Snyder will not become our next installed lead pastor, the Pastoral Profile then becomes the base document for a pastoral search and a Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) would be formed.

“While helping to clarify our decisions regarding the pastoral transition is important, we’re also very enthused about clarifying FPC’s unique identity and giftedness as we go through this discernment,” noted Elder Geoff Eddowes, co-chair of the Personnel Committee and member of the leader team. “Articulating our strengths and aspirations for our ministry gives us the platform to do even more amazing work. We hope that everyone will participate to share their stories and perspective.”

Envisioning Our Future Timeline





Meet Bill Owen and The Center for Healthy Churches



Dr. Bill Owen is a Congregational Consultant and Coach for CHC after a 32-year pastorate at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Cross Plains, TN, just north of Nashville. Bill is an experienced, certified leadership coach. He also works as a cognitive coach among educators, particularly secondary school teachers with a focus on innovation and personalized learning. He brings these skills and experiences to his work with and love for congregations and ministry staff development.

Bill Owen is a friendly, soft-spoken retired Baptist pastor who is serious about church. About making and keeping churches healthy, that is. And he's devoting this time in his life largely to that purpose as a consultant with the Center for Healthy Churches (CHC), based at Belmont University in Nashville, TN. Owen is also an adjunct professor at Belmont and has recently developed a training program for interim and transitional pastors. He and his wife, Cindy, have three sons and nine grandchildren.

The CHC (chchurches.org) describes its mission this way:

- *A Healthy Church is a community of Jesus followers with a shared vision, thriving ministry, and trusted leadership.*
- *CHC is devoted to improving the spiritual, emotional and organizational health of churches and ministers. We bring hope, help and healing in the spirit of Christ.*

The organization has worked for dozens of churches across the country, including two in the Presbytery of Donegal – First Presbyterian Church of York and Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Chester. First Presbyterian – York engaged CHC and Bill Owen in a vision process after the congregation had adopted a co-pastor model. According to Pastor Allison Beaulieu, they were looking for help in creating a strategic plan for the next 3-5 years.

“Appreciative inquiry (CHC's method) was the way for us to go. It draws on the best traditions and focuses on what is going well. That's not to say it dismisses what is not working, but it draws on strengths primarily. We found that [it] works well with ... churches that have rich traditions and don't need to be completely re-imagined and re-worked,” Beaulieu wrote to our Pastor Dan Snyder. First Presbyterian – York is now moving into the implementation phase of its new vision.

Westminster Presbyterian also used CHC to help develop a vision for the next 3-5 years, related Pastor Don Lincoln. “We now have 4 implementation teams that formed the first week in January that I cannot keep up with,” Lincoln wrote in his recommendation to Pastor Snyder. “Three of the four are humming along at a brisk pace. The fourth has a harder task – emerging generation (young adults) – and is taking some time to be thoughtful.”

For his part, Owen says, "In times of transition, healthy churches across the country are seizing the opportunity for self-study and direction finding. Clarity around **“who we are”** (when we are at our best) and **“where we go”** (as we understand God's will in the time and place he has placed us) is critical. Over the next weeks I look forward joining your Session, the **Envisioning our Future** leadership team, and the congregation as we join hearts and minds in a spirit of discernment and strength-based conversations. I am eager to come alongside you as a congregational coach and longtime pastor.”

“Our aim is to engage First Presbyterian Church as a whole around the question: What is God calling us to become? Interim seasons are most successful when predictable anxiety about the future is addressed and the church is empowered and called to agency,” Owen added. Regarding CHC's reliance on appreciative inquiry, a strengths-based approach to visioning, Owen references two powerful quotes, the first from business guru Peter Drucker:

“The task of organizational leadership is to create an alignment with strengths in ways that make a system's weaknesses irrelevant.”

And the second from Philippians 4:8:

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”



Brian Rutter

Meet the FPC 'Envisioning Our Future' Team

If you ask members of First Presbyterian's Envisioning Our Future Leadership Team (or more simply, the "Vision Team") what their hope is for the outcome of this visioning journey, you'll hear answers expressed in different ways...in different words. However, it's easy to identify a common thread in their responses. Members of the team use words and phrases like unification, bringing together, shared vision, and community.

Embarking on an exciting new chapter in First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster's history, the Vision Team, comprised of volunteer leaders and members of the FPC congregation, represents numerous constituencies who thrive at FPC. Their task is to plan and execute the important and impactful process that will bring together all voices of our church to discern and discover our future. Ask any member of this team and he or she will tell you emphatically, "In this process, every voice at FPC matters. 100% participation is our goal."

Led by co-chairs Jesse North and Cathy Roman, the Vision Team is optimistic about the outcomes of the process, which include the creation of a congregational profile and, subsequently, the building of a lead pastor profile to help us identify FPC's next Lead Pastor. Says Jesse, an FPC Elder, "The process itself will help us all grow closer to each other, grow in trusting God, and feel a sense of investment in our future together."

Team members easily articulate the value that will accrue to our church family. Vision Team member Kristin Jenkins says that the multi-month process is about our future. "This will allow us to be stronger together as we forge ahead." Martha Berry, who has served in several past and current volunteer roles at FPC, calls the process a "celebration of stories," citing what we can do together as a powerful and diverse community. Janet White, active in the chancel choir and member of the Vision Team, is enthused about our gaining a clear vision of the ways we can all work together to "grow and serve God at FPC."

All 12 members of the Vision Team, who represent the full congregation of First Presbyterian, hope that everyone who calls or has called FPC their church home is active in this critical process. Envisioning Our Future will allow our entire church to participate in three very important conversations about who we are and who we want to lead FPC tomorrow. As co-chair Cathy Roman says, "This is a very exciting time in the life of First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster. We all have the opportunity to discover the best of what we have at FPC, dream and explore what might be, and design a future for FPC."



The FPC 'Envisioning Our Future' Team:

Front Row (L to R): Kristen Jenkins, Cheryl Buesking, Scott Albright, Martha Barry, Janet White, Dan Snyder

Back Row (L to R): Bill Owen, Brian Rutter, Chuck Manners, Jesse North, Geoff Eddowes, Cathy Roman

(Not present: Kathy Miller, Josh Richard)

Desired Outcomes for the Team's Work

1. Clarifying the congregation's unique identity
2. Identifying the congregation's core values
3. Identifying the areas of mission and ministry about which the congregation feels most passionate and feels called to pursue
4. Projecting the type of facilities, finance, staff, structure (alignment) needed to fulfill the congregation's sense of call for future mission and ministry
5. Prepare Congregational Profile and Next Pastor Profile which will be key to the Pastor search process

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