

## **2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions First Presbyterian Church Gainesville, Georgia**

This 2017 five-year strategic plan for missions at FPC is growth-oriented and forward-looking, but is also retrospective and builds upon the lessons learned from implementing FPC's previous 2012 Strategic Plan for Missions. (See Appendix I for an analysis of those lessons.). As the current home page of our FPC website states so well, *"We are a very kind-hearted and mission-minded family of faith called to glorify God through engaging worship, caring relationships, faithful service, and generous giving."* This 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions reinforces our mission-mindedness and is the product of the work of the 2017 Strategic Planning Committee for Missions whose members are listed in Appendix II. This Plan was reviewed and adopted by FPC's Missions Committee and Session in November 2017.

### **The Guiding Purpose of FPC's Engagements in Missions**

FPC's guiding statement of purpose for its Ministry of Missions reads:

***As Christians, we are commissioned to display and convey the love and compassion of Jesus Christ for all people and the world through dedicated discipleship, selfless service, and inspirational outreach.***

Each word and phrase in this purpose statement has special significance worth noting. In PCUSA, we understand "mission" to be God's work for the sake of the world God loves. Adhering to the teachings and acts of Jesus Christ in our daily lives, and serving as His hands, feet, and embodiment in the world today are central to our Christian beliefs and our "commissioned" calling by God. Consequently, the words, "to display" through our acts of service and servant leadership in support of God's work are the cornerstone of missions (Matt. 20:26-28). "Conveying" and spreading the Good News through word and deed are also part of His Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). The expectation that we help grow the Church is embedded in that commission. We often speak of the "love" of Jesus without highlighting His exceptional "compassion" for people in all walks of life—Christ-like love and compassion are central components of our engagements in missions. Mission work is not only focused on serving other people throughout the "world," but also on caring for the Earth and all of its lifeforms as our Redbud Project exemplifies so well. "Dedicated discipleship" reflects what we learn and how we become equipped by the church to do God's work in the world through missions. Discipleship includes the

power of prayer for helping others and ourselves to be connected to God's will and grace. We honor "selfless service" and "inspirational outreach" as characteristics of excellence in mission work and adherence to the teachings of our Lord.

"Inspirational" also conveys being moved by Holy Spirit to do and believe as God would have us do. Dedicated discipleship, selfless service, and inspirational outreach apply to God's work both within our church and in the mission fields beyond our church in the wider community, region, nation, and world. Such discipleship, service, and outreach are needed everywhere. FPC is an extraordinary church in its wide-ranging and impactful commitments to missions. We continue to nurture and grow that distinctive exceptionality in honor and thanks to God.

### **Goals of FPC's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions**

There are many goals and new initiatives that could be pursued to advance missions at FPC over the next five years, and the 2012 Strategic Plan referenced many more than are presented here. However, the 2017 Strategic Planning Committee for Missions intentionally kept the number and focus of this Plan's goals to a manageable set that is composed of FPC's top priorities. We believe that these seven goals are the cornerstones for advancing missions within this church family over the next five years. Once these foundational goals are achieved, others and various related initiatives that rely on them for support can be pursued and are more likely to be achieved.

Achievement of each of the following goals will involve a complex and challenging set of tasks that are likely to take multiple years to complete and refine. The seven priority goals of this 2018-2022 Strategic Plan and the tactical actions outlined for their achievement are as follows:

**Goal # 1 (Create an Accessible Online Missions Digest of All of FPC's Recognized Missions Support Opportunities): *The Missions Committee, working with key missions support groups, will establish, publish on the FPC website, and keep updated annually a unified, comprehensive, and informative digest of all of FPC's external and internal missions support opportunities currently promoted and managed by various independent groups and ministries in the church and which collectively constitute the corporate works of the church in its Ministry of Missions.***

FPC is a church that is exceptionally mission-minded in many respects, but we have no unified and comprehensive digest of our numerous missions support opportunities. Consequently, our missions support is not as coordinated as it

could be, and conflicting initiatives and interests arise sometimes. The lack of accurate and current information available about FPC's wide-ranging missions support opportunities also precludes effective communication with current and prospective members about our specific commitments to missions and limits our ability to promote and attract participation in specific missions activities. A goal similar to this one was in the 2012 Strategic Plan for Missions but was only partially achieved and not sustained.

To achieve this goal, two members of an expanded Missions Committee will be appointed to co-lead a subcommittee charged with achieving this goal by the end of 2019 and refining and updating the Digest as needed at least annually thereafter. The subcommittee will initially draft a standard template and a sample of the completed template for the content of a FPC Missions Digest entry. Key leaders of various missions support groups at the church (e.g., Missions Committee, Diaconate Missions, Local Missions Expo, World Missions Conference, Presbyterian Women, BASIC and other Sunday School classes, Foundation, etc.) will be asked for their suggestions for strengthening the template before it is adopted by the Missions Committee. The final template and sample will be distributed church-wide for completion of Digest entries by the members of key missions support groups. Completed templates for recognized missions support opportunities at FPC will be returned to the subcommittee, be subject to initial review and editing by the subcommittee, and be reviewed and approved by the entire Missions Committee membership before an entry is officially placed in the FPC Missions Digest.

Once the Digest entries are published on the FPC website, they should be updated as needed through a similar process whenever a missions support opportunity is created, changed, or discontinued in order to maintain Digest accuracy. At least once each year, the authors of the Mission Digest entries will be asked to review their online summaries and submit proposed updates and changes through the same review and approval process to keep the Digest up to date. Each year, the subcommittee co-chairs will produce an annual progress report on the changes made, health, and growth of the FPC Missions Digest for presentation to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed.

**Goal # 2 (Expand Our Missions Vision and Venues): *FPC will maintain and grow the church's exceptional annual commitments of service in and contributions to various external local missions and world missions support opportunities through our Local Missions Expo and World Missions Conference, but also broaden and expand the church's***

***recognized array of missions support opportunities to include service in and contributions to God's work in our southern region of the country and elsewhere in our nation, as well as service in and contributions to the internal ministries of our church that foster and nurture the dedicated discipleship needed to be effectively engaged in God's work in the mission fields outside of the church.***

FPC has established and expects to continue and grow its rich array of local mission and world missions support opportunities. As indicated in Appendix I, FPC should now be ready to add an equally strong set of regional/national missions support opportunities to its externally-oriented mission field endeavors. For the Digest to be missions-comprehensive, these local, regional/national, and world outreach service commitments should also be complemented by the identification of our internal missions support opportunities that entail extensive volunteer services rendered to the church for the discipleship development that is so essential for our effectiveness in the mission fields outside the church.

To achieve the first part of this two-pronged goal, two members of an expanded Missions Committee will be appointed to co-lead a subcommittee charged with developing a plan in 2018 for adding regional/national missions support opportunities to FPC's external mission field endeavors. Whether the existing support structure for local missions should be expanded to include regional/national missions support opportunities or a separate support structure should be created for regional/national missions should be analyzed thoroughly and prayerfully considered when formulating the proposed plan. Church leaders of local missions should be involved in those deliberations. The proposed plan should receive Missions Committee and Session approval for implementation, beginning sometime in 2019. Implementation will involve expansion of the FPC Missions Digest to include regional/national missions support opportunities. Annual reports of progress made on achieving this dimension of Goal # 2 will be submitted to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed.

To achieve the other part of this two-pronged goal, this same co-led subcommittee will be charged with developing a plan in 2018 for adding volunteer services *within the church* to the array of missions support opportunities at FPC. This expanded view of missions will highlight internal service opportunities which are strongly linked to the discipleship development needed for effective external missions outreach. Some examples of volunteer services internal to the church that could be considered for inclusion as servant leadership that advances God's work through discipleship development are: teaching Sunday School; serving as

youth advisors and leaders; making hospital and home visits to members in need of support; participating in music ministry activities; among others. This subcommittee will identify the internal missions support opportunities that should be spotlighted in an expanded view of missions. In that regard, it is important to remember that FPC and our Child Development Center are nonprofit service organizations worthy of our support as much as other nonprofit missions in our local communities. Church leaders and coordinators of such internal volunteer service should be involved in those deliberations. The proposed plan should receive Missions Committee and Session approval for implementation, beginning sometime in 2019. Implementation will involve expansion of the FPC Missions Digest to include missions support opportunities within the church. Annual reports of progress made on achieving this dimension of Goal # 2 will be submitted to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed.

Coordination of the work of these two agendas for expanding the scope of missions will be necessary, especially when devising plans for how pledged and reported hours of volunteer service and structured time in prayer are to be recorded. Lessons learned and options created for simplifying the pledging and reporting of volunteer service hours in FPC's local missions work should be adopted where practical for our regional/national missions and internal missions activities. Improving communication with the congregation about those reporting options should also be pursued to alleviate individual concerns about the difficulty of reporting worked hours monthly by missions activity.

**Goal # 3 (Improve Communications on the FPC Website About Our Missions Support Opportunities and Ministry of Missions Achievements):** *The Missions Committee, working with the church's website support staff, will strengthen the visibility, content, accuracy, and promotion of our comprehensive array of missions support opportunities, Ministry of Missions activities and support groups, and missions support achievements on the church's website.*

Organizational websites have become the primary source, repository, and 24/7 access point for information about the organization and its operations. FPC has a relatively new and revised website, but as outlined in Appendix I, its links to missions support opportunities are not easily accessed, and much of its content on missions is incomplete, inaccurate, and/or out-of-date. FPC's Ministry of Missions is rich in its multidimensional structure and annual achievements, but that powerful story is not told on the website. Missions and the Ministry of Missions are not highly visible or prominent on our website. Rectifying such

weaknesses in FPC's website is essential for improving communication about and advancing missions.

To achieve this goal, two members of an expanded Missions Committee will be appointed to co-lead a subcommittee charged with working with the church's pastors and website support staff to achieve substantial progress on this goal in 2018, with goal attainment reached in 2019. Refining and updating the missions components of the FPC website should be maintained as needed and performed at least annually thereafter. Issues to be resolved include adding a visible link to "Missions" on the home page—if the current "Serve" link on the home page is also retained (which may be beneficial to some website users), it and the Missions link could lead to the same webpages that describe the church's internal and external missions support opportunities as described in the FPC Missions Digest. The Digest should include the name and contact information for a church member who serves as an advocate/coordinator/advisor for each missions support opportunity—someone in our church family who can help others become engaged in specific missions support opportunities. The online Missions Digest information should also include a "donate" feature that facilitates submission of financial contributions designated for specific missions activities.

In addition, FPC's Ministry of Missions should have web pages linked to the current "Ministries" tab on the home page and be cross-linked with the Missions button as well. These pages should include the Guiding Purpose of the Ministry of Missions (as described in this Strategic Plan), information on the membership, responsibilities, and goal achievements of the Missions Committee, the latest version of the FPC Missions Policy (to be revised again in 2018), the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions, and archived annual reports of missions accomplishments for FPC's major missions initiatives and missions support groups. This subcommittee should also establish procedures and processes for ensuring the accuracy and currency of missions information on the FPC website. This subcommittee should also post on the Missions Ministry website feature stories on missions that inspire personal engagement in missions. Annual reports of progress made on goal attainment will be submitted to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed.

**Goal # 4 (Plan for Growth in Service Hours, Financial Contributions, and Time in Prayer for Missions): *FPC will maintain healthy levels of missions support by having its key missions support groups plan for and achieve annual growth in personal service hours, financial contributions, and time in prayer for our major missions initiatives and many of our individual***

***missions support opportunities—healthy levels of missions support are expected to be consistent with or exceed the growth of our church membership and annual operating budget.***

Stewardship appeals for growth in our financial contributions for the operation of the church are typically responded to generously by our congregation. Such growth in giving keeps the church healthy financially. Many, but not all, of our missions support opportunities operate financially outside of the church's operating budgets through special restricted fund accounts. The financial health of those missions accounts and the individuals and agencies who receive our support annually also depend on growth in contributions received. However, as observed in Appendix I, we often do not plan for or achieve increases in such missions support. We do better in planning for and achieving growth in pledged and worked volunteer hours of service than in financial commitments to missions. As a mission-minded church family, we can and should do better. For those who aspire to a 50% level of giving to missions, annual growth in our commitments to missions is essential.

To achieve this goal, two members of an expanded Missions Committee will be appointed to co-lead a subcommittee charged with working with the church's key missions support groups, the pastors, the Finance Committee, those responsible for managing missions restricted accounts, and those accounting for pledged and worked volunteer service hours to achieve annual progress on reaching this goal. The subcommittee will track the extent to which various major missions initiatives of the church plan for and achieve growth in contributed funds, volunteer hours, and structured prayer time each year, as compared to growth in church membership and the church's operating budget. Annual progress reports of goal achievement will be produced by this subcommittee and shared with the Missions Committee for their consideration and follow-up as needed.

***Goal # 5 (Multiply Opportunities Annually for FPC's Youth to be Engaged in Missions): The Missions Committee working with youth leaders will organize, promote, and support youth participation in at least three new missions support opportunities each year, including at least one short-term mission trip regionally, nationally or internationally, to foster discipleship development and the mission-mindedness of our teens and young adults.***

Missions support opportunities for adults at FPC are well-established but are not as available for youth. A little more than a decade ago, FPC had a large, faith-based youth program that helped produce several "home-grown" missionaries to

whom the church has made financial contributions over the years. Church membership and the youth program had declined substantially since that time but are rebounding in recent years thanks to strong pastoral and youth program leadership. Our current youth programs for middle and high school youth are growing again and would benefit greatly from having more opportunities to participate in missions support locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The power of such experiences was confirmed beautifully by our youth who made recent presentations to WOW and the BASIC Sunday School about their short-term mission trips and Montreat experiences last summer. Concentrated efforts to revive and support youth-oriented, faith-based missions experiences is critically important at this time, not only for the benefit of our youth and their discipleship development, but also for their parents and loved ones who value such spiritual growth.

To achieve this goal, two members of an expanded Missions Committee will be appointed to co-lead a subcommittee charged with working with the church's youth leadership team to achieve this goal annually, beginning with the 2018 academic year. They will share their proposed plans for new youth missions support opportunities with the Missions Committee for review and approval. This subcommittee and their youth leader partners will be expected to multiply the number of missions support opportunities for FPC youth yearly. Opportunities for short-term international mission trips could include trips organized and sponsored by reputable agencies that cater to faith-based youth missions. Ways in which the church and its members can help support these trips financially should also be formulated as part of these plans. This subcommittee should also ensure that youth participants engaged in short-term mission trips be blessed and commissioned at Sunday worship services and have an opportunity to share their inspiring mission experiences with church members at WOW, in adult Sunday Schools, and possibly at Youth Sunday services. Annual reports of progress made on goal attainment will be submitted to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed.

**Goal # 6 (Periodically Evaluate Missions Support Opportunities): *The Missions Committee will ensure that the recognized missions support opportunities in our FPC Missions Digest are reviewed and evaluated annually by appropriate church groups to determine whether increased or decreased support is warranted after considering changed circumstances, the resources available, other missions priorities, and the value and impact of FPC's contributions to particular missions.***

Circumstances change over time which can affect the need-level for specific missions support activity. It is wise to periodically evaluate the entries in the FPC Missions Digest to determine whether church support for those missions support opportunities should be continued, discontinued, or changed significantly in light of changed circumstances and the value and impact of FPC's contributions to particular missions. Too often, such periodic evaluations have not been done, and missions support has continued unquestioned and unchanged.

To achieve this goal, two members of an expanded Missions Committee will be appointed to co-lead a subcommittee charged with developing in 2018 oversight procedures to ensure that annual evaluations are performed and appropriate adjustments are subsequently proposed and made to the Missions Digest. Such evaluations are intended to be conducted by the members of FPC's key missions support groups including the Missions Committee, Diaconate Missions, Local Missions Expo, World Missions Conference, Presbyterian Women, BASIC and other Sunday School classes, Foundation, etc. When a particular missions support opportunity listed in the Digest is sponsored by more than one key church group, its evaluation will be coordinated by the affected church groups. Annual reports of progress made on goal attainment will be submitted to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed.

**Goal # 7 (Change Policies, Procedures, and Processes to Enable the Missions Committee to Provide Appropriate Oversight of the Ministry of Missions and Facilitate Achievement of FPC's Strategic Goals for Missions): *The Session will formally affirm that Missions Support in all of its forms constitutes a central and prominent commitment of our church family to do God's work for the sake of the world God loves, and toward that end, will charge the Missions Committee to propose changes in the Missions Committee's and the church's policies, procedures, and processes for subsequent Session approval that will ensure that the Missions Committee takes on and routinely provides appropriate and effective church-wide leadership, oversight, review, approval, coordination, and support for FPC's Ministry of Missions as reflected in the Missions Digest and for the achievement of the goals in FPC's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions.***

As the lessons learned from implementing the previous strategic plan indicate (see Appendix I), there is a need to reaffirm the centrality and prominence of missions at FPC, communicate better about our complete array of missions support opportunities, improve coordination among our various independent

missions support groups, and expand and grow our missions support commitments. The tactical plans outlined in this document for achieving our strategic goals for advancing missions over the next five years call for changes in the way we configure, organize and operate our Missions Committee as the Session's chief leadership advocate for the church's Ministry of Missions. FPC's Missions Policy and other missions support operations will require changes as well if the church's strategic goals for advancing missions over the next five years are to be achieved fully.

Once this 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions is approved by the Missions Committee, it, along with a proposed statement for Session to reaffirm the centrality of Missions Support at FPC and a proposed charge to the Missions Committee to recommend to Session necessary changes in policies, procedures, and processes related to missions, will be forwarded to the Session for their review and approval by the end of 2017. In 2018, the Chair and Vice Chair (new position) of the Missions Committee will take the lead in working with the pastors, an expanded set of Missions Committee members, and leaders of key missions support groups at FPC to identify and propose for review and approval by the Missions Committee and Session specific changes to the Missions Committee membership, structure, and operation. Proposed changes to FPC's Missions Policy will also be necessary to be consistent with FPC's approved 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions. Following those approvals which are expected in February or March 2018, changes affecting the Missions Committee will be implemented, and the attention of the Chair and Vice Chair will turn toward seeking similar approvals in other missions-related policies, procedures, and processes at FPC by June 2018 to ensure achievement of the goals in the Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions. In December 2018, the co-chairs of the six subcommittees identified above will be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes made in missions-related policies, procedures, and processes in relation to their expected goal achievement and to make suggestions for further changes.

The Chair and Vice Chair will follow up as needed on that feedback. In subsequent years, they will monitor church operations to assess their effect on the annual progress reports of the subcommittees to determine whether additional refinements and changes are needed in policies, procedures and processes going forward. Annual reports of progress made on goal attainment will be submitted to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed.

## **Rationales for Other Specific Initiatives Cited in the Plan**

This Strategic Plan calls for the Missions Committee to assign co-chairs of a subcommittee the task of facilitating achievement of each of the seven goals cited above. Having clearly identified leadership for a goal's attainment is typically essential for actually achieving the goal. Furthermore, many of these goals require a complex set of tasks to be completed. Having co-chairs lead each subcommittee permits a healthy division of leadership responsibilities, mutual support and encouragement in leadership decision-making, and backup coverage of leadership responsibilities when necessary.

Annual progress reporting by each subcommittee to the Missions Committee for their review and follow-up as needed ensures that achievement of each strategic goal remains highly visible and a priority among the Missions Committee's many ongoing duties and objectives. Expected results in goal attainment are more likely to be achieved when progress toward such results is evaluated and inspected regularly. Subcommittees will also keep the Missions Committee informed of their progress at monthly meetings throughout the year.

The plural term, "missions," is used throughout this Plan. That is intentional for a couple of reasons. First, we have not been consistent at FPC in our references to the church's commitments to "mission" or "missions." The World Mission Conference supports a long list of missions, but its name includes the singular version of the term. The Local Missions Expo, on the other hand, also supports a long list of missions, but its name includes the plural version of the term. Our organizational chart for the Session refers to our Ministry of Missions (plural), but our Mission Committee typically references itself in the singular. Since FPC annually supports so many different missions, the plural version of the term appears more appropriate than the singular version.

Second, use of the term "missions" (plural) appears to have long-standing roots in our denomination over the last two centuries. In 2005, the Presbyterian Historical Society (PCUSA) published the booklet, "From Age to Age: The Spirit of Missionary Enterprise" which repeatedly references our denomination's focus on missions in its plural form. It states, "The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was the first Protestant denomination in the United States to organize a missions committee at the national level. In 1802, the General Assembly appointed seven members to the initial Standing Committee of Missions...The success of the committee and subsequent growth in mission work led to the organization of a permanent Board of Missions in 1815 and a separate Board of Foreign Missions in 1837."

However, in recent times, PCUSA has referenced its mission ministry in singular terms through its Presbyterian Mission Agency. The Presbyterian World Mission's *Mission Personnel Guide* describes PCUSA mission support opportunities in 2017-18. It specifically describes "mission" in the singular to reflect God's unified mission to overcome all human divisions. As stated in the *Guide*, "...we reach across boundaries because that's what Jesus did:... Jesus brought good news to the poor, ate with sinners and tax collectors, healed Gentiles, and included outcasts...he created a new definition of family. This new definition includes everyone (p. 38)."

Apparently, there are inconsistent historical references to "mission" and "missions," even within our denomination. The wording of this Strategic Plan offers FPC an opportunity to prayerfully reconsider whether either and/or both terms are appropriate going forward. Uses of the singular or plural versions of the term in this Plan are subject to change as deemed appropriate at a later date, but the strategic goals expressed in this Plan are expected to remain firm commitments over the next five years.

### **FPC's Place in the Missional Church Movement**

The missional church movement began 20 years ago, and its reforming effect on the Christian Church inspired FPC to launch its bold World Missions and later Local Missions initiatives. Alan Hirsch, a thought leader in the missional movement described the missional church as "a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission in the world. In other words, the church's true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission, but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus." (Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*. Brazos, 2007, 82.)

The missional movement seeks to transform the nature of the church from one that has long been internally focused on developing attractive, faith-based programming where participants largely come to church to receive and be comforted by the Word into a reformed orientation that is externally focused as a body of believers intent on living and doing God's work in the world—being "missionaries" if you will through their actions, contributions, and life's work. Missional orientations often make churches come to life in meaningful ways and are attractive to many of all ages who

are looking to have more productive and rewarding church experiences than traditional church orientations tend to provide.

Mike Breen, another thought leader in the missional church movement, warns us, however, not to overlook the church's calling to build disciples (Mike Breen, *Building the Discipling Culture*, 3 Dimensional Ministries, 2011). Breen asserts that dedicated disciples of Christ do mission. Without building dedicated discipleship within the church experience, a church's external missional focus can be rather hollow and less effective in accomplishing God's work and the Great Commission. Discipleship matters, and the church's mission to build discipleship is vitally important.

Although FPC does not explicitly identify itself as a missional church, our exceptional commitments to missions and our strong mission-mindedness place us inside the tent of the missional church movement. However, as this Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions reflects, our interests in broadening and growing our service in the mission fields external to the church are balanced with a strong commitment to missional service within the church that is directly and indirectly related to building dedicated discipleship. As discipleship grows, so grows the impact of our work in the external mission fields. That balance of internal and external missions commitments positions FPC well to fulfill God's calling to do God's work everywhere in the world. This 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions reflects FPC's deep commitment to doing and supporting God's work for the sake of the world God loves.

## **Appendix I**

### **Lessons Learned from Implementing the 2012 Strategic Plan for Missions**

The 2017 Strategic Planning Committee for Missions concluded that there are many lessons that have been learned from our experience with implementing the 2012 Strategic Plan for Missions. That Plan contained 7 near-term goals (A through H) and a larger number of prospective “long-term goals.” Most of those goals were loosely framed, not sufficiently specific or measurable, often weakly aligned with relevant plans of action, and sometimes impractical to implement fully. Specific committee assignments for goal achievement do not appear to have been made. There also may have been too many diverse goals and activities cited that stretched the concentrated focus of the Missions Committee and other groups too thinly. Consequently, it is not surprising that many of those goals and their associated plans of action were not realized or sustained to any notable extent over the past five years. The priority goals for the 2018 Strategic Plan should be fewer in number, concrete, practical, measurable, sustainable, and tightly aligned with appropriate planned actions and tactics for achieving and sustaining them over the course of the next five years.

Two goals in the 2012 Strategic Plan for Missions that were achieved substantially over the last five years include: Goal D, “Continue the annual World Mission Conference as a concentrated way to inform our congregation about and encourage participation in opportunities for world mission that receive our ongoing support;” and Goal E, “Establish an annual Local Mission Conference beginning in CY 2013. The purpose would be to increase members’ personal involvement with local missions we support financially by making their programs and needs more visible.” Not all of the proposed plans of action associated with these two goals were successfully implemented. However, the long-standing WMC has been continued successfully over the past five years, and a new Local Missions Expo was successfully launched and has been continued annually.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the 2012 Strategic Plan for Missions is two-fold. First, FPC’s commitment to missions was successfully expanded from a predominantly world missions focus to a broader commitment that now includes a substantial focus on local missions as well. Secondly, FPC’s world missions focus continues to be aimed largely at garnering a substantial and relatively stable level of annual financial support from the congregation for our support of various world missions, while FPC’s local missions focus emphasizes a substantial and growing level of personal engagement of time, effort and talents in the work and operations of various local mission agencies and initiatives.

After having established at FPC a highly productive commitment to world and local missions, perhaps our next strategic advance should be to broaden further FPC's commitments to the mission fields at the regional and national levels. Service opportunities in the region pertaining to disaster relief after the hurricanes in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico have been especially prevalent recently in 2017. Our youth annually volunteer their services in West Virginia as part of Son Servants. There are numerous other opportunities for doing God's work in the region and nation. Our region and nation deserve more attention in FPC's future commitments to missions while we continue to grow our local and world missions efforts.

Equipping the saints within FPC to be disciples of God's word and work constitutes vital mission service within the church. Dedicated discipleship is an essential prerequisite for effective external engagements in local, regional & national, and world missions. Broadening formal recognition of God's work in missions to include service engagements within the church's internal ministries as well as in its external outreach to regional and national mission fields will require not only an expanded conception of missions in the 2018 Strategic Plan, but also corresponding adjustments to the content of FPC's 2017 Mission Policy.

Communicating the rich story of missions engagements and accomplishments at FPC is vital for facilitating and growing personal and corporate growth in missions in an efficient and effective manner. Goal A in the 2012 Strategic Plan called for the church to: "Enhance communication about mission—First Presbyterian Church will utilize a variety of means of communication to inform the congregation of the ways we are currently participating in mission, the possibilities for expanding our mission outreach, and the opportunities for personal involvement and support." Regrettably, that goal was not achieved satisfactorily. There is no evidence that we have been able to compile and publicize a comprehensive and accurate listing of the many ways we are currently participating in missions. There is no question that a number of groups at FPC support and engage in various important missions, but their efforts are typically independent of one another and are not systematically captured in a published corporate record of the church's current missions support opportunities. This is a goal area that needs greater attention and success going forward.

Websites have become a principal source of published information about the activities of most organizations, and the 2012 Plan called for the FPC website to "include mission information." However, a lack of specificity on the expected content on missions in FPC's website and on mechanisms to ensure its accuracy, detail, and comprehensiveness may have contributed to our current state of affairs in which missions is not highly visible or accurately portrayed on FPC's website. Missions is

not identified as a link anywhere on the FPC home page. Furthermore, if you click on the Ministries link on the home page, the Ministry of Missions is not listed there, nor is the Missions Committee. If you click on the Serve link on the home page it takes you to the Outreach page, and if you click on the Serve in the Community link there, you finally come to the page that uses the term, "Local Missions." Getting to the World Missions page follows a similar layered path. And when content on local and world missions is finally found, much of it is not up to date, not very detailed, not comprehensive of all of FPC's engagements in missions, not descriptive of the extent of FPC's involvement, often lacking in the identification of an FPC contact person, and not very compelling or inspirational. The 2018 Strategic Plan needs to address how such weaknesses and deficiencies in FPC's communications about missions on its website will be rectified in order to advance participation in missions in the future.

The wording of Goal D in the 2012 Strategic Plan suggested that maintaining the status quo in the operation of the WMC was expected and sufficient. Perhaps that is one reason why annual fundraising goals for the WMC have changed very little in recent years. In contrast, growth in annual pledged service hours for Local Missions has been substantial. Without growth, the value of our financial support for various missions drops over time. The 2018 Strategic Plan should not only call for planned growth in missions support, but also periodic evaluations of whether our support for particular missions should be continued or diverted to other priorities in missions.

All of these lessons learned have been instrumental in shaping and formulating the goals and action plans of FPC's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan for Advancing Missions, thanks be to God.

## **Appendix II**

### **2017 Strategic Planning Committee for Missions**

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