



PC(USA) Church Mission Study
First Presbyterian Church of Puyallup
Puyallup, Washington
July 2025

First Presbyterian Church, Puyallup

Mission Study

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction & Purpose**
- 2. Our Church's Story**
- 3. Who We Are Today**
- 4. Worship and Ministry Life**
- 5. Our Community Context**
- 6. Leadership and Staff**
- 7. Facilities and Finances**
- 8. Discerning Our Strengths and Challenges**
- 9. Listening to the Congregation**
- 10. Moving Forward in Hope**
- 11. Final Reflections**



Presbyterian Women's Tea featuring Norselanders choir from Puyallup High School

1. Introduction & Purpose

First Presbyterian is guided by thoughtful leaders who have embraced the task of leading this congregation into a purposeful future. When Pastor Sue Watkins announced her plans to retire after more than 21 years of indispensable and valuable service to the First Presbyterian Church in Puyallup, our Session determined that it was time to initiate the reflection process that would support our efforts to call the right pastor who can lead this committed congregation into the future.

First Presbyterian has been exploring ways to expand vitality and participation while celebrating the joy that comes from working together across the boundaries of all kinds. After Tom Paine was appointed as the Transitional Pastor, the Session appointed a Mission Study Committee consisting of three members (Cheryl Hodgson, Patrica Grossie-Walton and Sally Zeiger Hanson) to lead the Mission Study Process. The Mission Study Committee hosted two Town Hall meetings in the Spring of 2025 in order to hear input from congregants about what they currently like about the church, where they see areas for change and to begin to paint a picture of what the future might hold. The findings from these meetings are detailed below.

This resulting Mission Study document will be used by the Pastor Nominating Committee to create a position description, and coordinating and working with Olympia Presbytery, and to find the pastoral candidate who is a fit for this congregation by an elected Pastoral Nominating Committee.

In seeking to be a church that is known for its service and desire to be a blessing to the community, the elders are leading the congregation with both our historical roots and transformation in mind.



2. Our Church's Story

Our Church has been at the corner of Pioneer Avenue and 4th Street in downtown Puyallup for over 130 years. In the city blocks around us, there are municipal buildings, retail and restaurants, other churches, and residences, both single family and multiple tenants.

(A complete history, compiled by Paul Hackett for our 125th Anniversary is available upon request.)

The First Presbyterian Church of Puyallup was established in 1889 with members worshiping in homes. During that first year the church building was constructed. The first sanctuary was a wooden structure, in a Victorian Style, built in about 1889. The education wing was the result of two separate expansion efforts. The original sanctuary was taken down, and the current A frame worship area, fellowship hall and office structure were built, and dedicated in 1959. In 1983, the congregation celebrated the burning of the mortgage.

Rev. Lackey was named pulpit supply in 1889 and many pastors and associate pastors have been called since then. First Presbyterian has been blessed to have pastors with unusually long tenure. Most recently, Pastor Sue Watkins was with us for more than twenty-one years. Median time of service has been over fifteen years.

The Session of four has grown to the current Session of nine Elders leading five Committees. There are currently eight members on our Board of Deacons.

Presbyterian Women (PW) Circles began in 1929. Today Presbyterian Women (PW) celebrate three Circles: Chase-MacInnes, Hoff-Nicholson and Eve. PW has approximately thirty members.

From the beginning, our church has made Christian education a priority. Over time there have been Directors of Christian Education, Youth Directors, Logos Program, camp opportunities, and Vacation Bible School programs.

First Presbyterian Church is a church with a strong mission history. Mission support started in 1889 with Helping Hand Society. There were several years of support for Puyallup Action through Christian Education (PACE). Over the years there has been involvement in Miles of Pennies, Habitat for Humanity, Paint Tacoma Beautiful, and mission trips across our country and in Mexico. Missionaries have served on the mission boat Anna Jackman, and the Sheldon Jackson College in Alaska. We have supported missionaries abroad in Madagascar, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, China, Guatemala, and Kenya.

We also have a rich history of caring for those in need in our community. We support local ministries helping people struggling with lack of housing, food, and necessities. We give money and needed items to these ministries each year. And we give financial and food support to a local homeless day center, New Hope Resource Center.

For many years, until the COVID pandemic, we were members of Freezing Nights, a local ecumenical homeless ministry, which operated from October through March. With several other churches in our area, we gave our guests a warm and safe place to sleep, and gave them supper and breakfast. After COVID, with us and many of our ecumenical partners diminished in active members and finances, we have not yet found the will, energy and resources needed to restart this program.

More recently in Puyallup, our church has connected with the Puyallup Tribe and the Luckett House. We provide financial support, shared services, and work projects at the Church of Indian Fellowship. Luckett House is a mental health treatment center for people seeking treatment near Pierce County. Our church members provide rides for residents to get to our church services. In addition to supporting the New Hope Resource Center, we prepare Bags of Grace - ziplocs filled with necessities that can be shared with people in need as our paths cross with them, and support the Puyallup Food Bank. Our church also provides bags of food and snacks for Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) kids to take home each weekend.



3. Who We Are Today

As of our 2024 Church Statistical Report, we have 104 members, and some friends who worship with us regularly. We have many active older members, with twenty-three aged 56 to 70, and twenty-five aged over 70. We are a majority white congregation with a few members of color. We have 13 youth, with ages ranging from 5 to 18 years old.

Our Mission Statement (adopted by Session, May 20, 2014 - Reaffirmed in 2025)

As faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, we reach up to God, reach into His Word, and reach out to love and serve.

In the Fall of 2019, we became a PC(USA) Matthew 25 Congregation. We celebrated our commitment at the PC(USA) Matthew 25: A Gathering and Commissioning Celebration (on ZOOM) on June 10, 2020. Our Session chose to act on all three areas of focus.

Focus #1: Building congregational vitality by challenging people and congregations to deepen their faith and get actively and joyfully engaged with their community and the world.

This focus was a natural choice for us as it fit into our continuing work toward becoming a missional church. Our vitality quest began long before the Matthew 25 initiative. In 2012, a Guide Team started working with Olympia Presbytery Presbyter, the Rev. Dr. Keith Tanis, to transform our congregation to a missional congregation. Activities and experiments to introduce the congregation to missional actions were planned and carried out during the next several years. In late 2017, our Session voted to enter the Vitality Pathway, a several year process to understand the congregation's vision of its future doing God's work. We are still in the process of traveling the pathway. We started with a dinner event called "Remember When". We focused on our approximately 130-year history. Rev. Heather James led us as we celebrated the changes we have gone through in our history and came to an understanding of how we have evolved during our long history. The changes we seek now are a continuation of this.



Puyallup First Presbyterian Church Covenant of Relational Behaviors

A Vitality Team was formed to create our Covenant of Relational Behaviors. This covenant is a tool to help us as we discuss our future. A future that will require change. The Vitality Team studied and presented a proposed covenant to the Session and to the congregation for input. Every phrase in the covenant is based on scripture. The covenant was adopted by the Session on January 21, 2020. It was signed by members of our church family on January 26, 2020.

We are members of a Holy Spirit led community, part of the larger body of Christ, which is at work in the world to share God's saving grace. We affirm our need to be inspired and challenged by the Gospel. With our actions and words, we agree to work together honestly and openly, living the truth of God's gospel with respect, honor, and joy. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we listen and respond to God's voice in prayer and seek his guidance in scripture.

We seek what God wants for our whole church. In times of disagreement, we will trust the Holy Spirit to lead us to a solution grounded in Christ.

- *We will work together by listening to one another with love, respect, compassion, and receptive minds.*
- *We will resist letting hidden problems, disagreements or conflicts grow into resentments, frustrations, and anger.*
- *We will practice patience, "bearing with one another in love," even when we disagree and cannot find immediate resolution.*
- *We will avoid gossip and address conflict openly with intentional empathy and respect for one another in Christ.*
- *We will give grace and forgiveness in our relationships, always loving, caring, and praying for our church and each other.*

Our Covenant of Relational Behaviors reflects a deep commitment to kindness, honesty, and spiritual maturity. In practice, our congregation values respectful dialogue and has generally handled disagreements with grace and humility. That said, like many churches, we are still learning how to navigate change and challenge with full transparency and courage.

We recognize that our warm, family-like culture can sometimes unintentionally become insular. We are open to growing in our ability to receive new people and new ideas with equal care. Our leadership has worked to foster trust and healthy communication, and we want to build on this as we move into a new season of leadership.

Focus #2: Eradicating systemic poverty by working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

We have a rich history of caring for those in need in our community. We support local ministries helping people struggling with lack of housing, food, and necessities. We give money and needed items to these ministries each year. And we give financial and food support to a local homeless day center, New Hope Resource Center.

For many years, until the COVID pandemic, we were members of Freezing Nights, a local ecumenical homeless ministry, which operated from October through March. With several other churches in our area, we gave our guests a warm and safe place to sleep, and gave them supper and breakfast.

Therefore, choosing this Matthew 25 focus was a natural fit. We strive to do more than help those in need. We want to understand the reasons people are forced to continue to live in poverty and help to make changes to the systems that keep them there.

Focus #3: Dismantling structural racism by advocating and acting to break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.

We did not choose this focus originally. We thought Congregational Vitality and Systemic Poverty were the two we were already working on and would be all the work we could handle. In March 2020, our world took on a new look. And, as Pastor Sue said at the Matthew 25 commissioning, “Dismantling Structural Racism chose us.” We feel compelled to work in this area too. Our Session approved the addition of Focus #3 on July 21, 2020.

As a congregation of the PC(USA), First Presbyterian Church of Puyallup aligns with the denomination’s values of inclusion, grace, and justice. Our theology is rooted in the Reformed tradition, and we value open inquiry and a thoughtful engagement with scripture. We see the Bible as the inspired Word of God and strive to interpret it faithfully through study, prayer, and the lens of Christ’s love. Our congregation includes individuals with a range of spiritual expression from those who prefer traditional liturgy to those drawn to missional outreach and social justice.

We are not bound by rigid doctrinal expectations. Instead, we seek to cultivate a faith that is both intellectually honest and spiritually vibrant. We welcome differing views and trust the Holy Spirit to guide us in shared discernment. Our prayer life includes both communal and individual practices, and we hope to continue deepening in both areas as we move forward.



4. Worship and Ministry Life

First Presbyterian Church is a friendly church, and many feel a family bond with other attendees. Currently, there is one service at 10:30 am each Sunday. There are beautiful seasonal banners at worship, children's sermons, a land acknowledgement, hearing devices for assistance during worship service, Jambassadors - children who greet visitors and give them jam made by members, and name tags to help us learn each other's names.

An audio/visual system supports worship and provides on-line access to services for those who can't attend in person. While we livestream our Sunday worship service and provide hearing devices for in-person worship, our broader digital engagement is still emerging. Our website serves as an informational hub, and we maintain a presence on social media, though we recognize the potential to expand our outreach and storytelling through digital platforms.

Many in our congregation are comfortable with in-person connections, but we also see growing interest in learning how to reach others through online tools. A new pastor with digital fluency could help us modernize our communication and connect with families and individuals who seek spiritual connection online before ever walking through the door.



Our gifted chancel choir, bell choir, and talented praise team provide special music. Each Sunday after worship, we enjoy coffee and snacks during fellowship. Other fellowship opportunities include Wednesday morning Bible Study with the Pastor and Adult Sunday School at 9:00 am each Sunday. Special events throughout the year include a Combined Lenten Choir with the United Methodist Church, participated in Tacoma Pride Day, a Halloween Candy Give Away, a quarterly community outreach potluck after worship, Fellowship Hour, and the Hanging of the Greens where many decorate the church for Advent. Members and friends of all ages join in a Christmas caroling event. We visit homes of those who are unable to come to church with music and carols. We follow-up with a potluck meal and fellowship for the carolers. We recently started a monthly Men's Breakfast and the attendance has increased at each gathering.



We currently have youth who are connected to the congregation, though programming for this group is limited. Our Youth Director is engaged in maintaining relationships and creating occasional opportunities for connection, learning, and service. In the past, we have had Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Logos, and other children's programs. We recognize that a strong ministry for young people will require renewed investment, creativity, and staffing support.

There are currently no formal programs for college students or young adults, but we are eager to explore ways to engage this demographic through intergenerational worship, service opportunities, and relationship-building.

As a congregation, we strive to be a mission-driven church, continually searching for what God's plans are for us. We seek to serve our community by understanding its needs and working to meet those needs through activism and charity. We sponsor and/or work with numerous ministries and outreach programs locally, nationally, and globally.

5. Our Community Context



Puyallup, Washington is a city of approximately 43,260 (2022) residents, located 10 miles east of Tacoma, and 35 miles south of Seattle. It is in the Puyallup Valley, near the snow-capped Mount Rainier (Tahoma or Takhoma) and in the Puget Sound (Salish Sea) area.

The Puyallup Tribe of Indians have lived in the Puyallup Valley for thousands of years. They hunted, fished and foraged in the streams and the land. In 1830, the first people of European descent settled here. In the following years, many more settlers moved into the area, drawn by the rich soil. One of the many people who came was Ezra Meeker, who settled in the Puyallup Valley in 1862. He was a farmer who became rich growing hops. He donated the land for a church to the group of area residents who established the First Presbyterian Church of Puyallup.

Our Community - Within a three mile radius

Of the 91,170 people in this area, 28.3% are 55 years old or older. 25.6% are adults ages 35 to 54. Adult ages 18 to 34 comprise 24%. 22% are children and young people ages 0 to 17. By far, the largest racial group is White (non-Hispanic) (72.7%), with Hispanic (9.1%), and Asian (5.8%) being the next two. Black (3.2%), Pacific Islander (1.1%), Native American (0.7%) and Other (7.3%) complete this population snapshot.



In this area, most people (61.7%) live in a single family dwelling, 28.8% live in apartments, and 4.8% live in mobile homes. 56.5% of folks are in business, management, sales and office occupations, while 14.5% are in service positions. 29% are in the blue collar jobs such as construction, maintenance, production and transportation.

In the demographic information from the Presbyterian Church (USA), we learned that 55.4% of the population in this area are “Unclaimed,” meaning that they are not yet affiliated with a worshipping community.

Our County – Pierce County, Washington State

Pierce County, WA has an estimated population of 941,170 in 2024.

Again, the largest racial group is white at 71.9%, with Black 8.2%, Hispanic 13.1%, Asian 7.8%, American Indian and Native Alaskan 1.9%, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander 1.9% and those claiming two or more races at 8.2%.



The largest industries in Pierce County are health care and social assistance, retail, and construction.

In 2023, the median household income was \$96,632. The percentage of owner-occupied housing units was 64.8, and the median value of these units was \$484,400. As with many areas around the country, there is not a lot of affordable housing available. In 2023, 16.5% of the population was living with “severe housing problems.”

Within the county, the January 2024 Homeless Point-in-Time Count found 2,661 people living on the streets or in shelters. This was 23% higher than the January 2023 count.

There are several colleges and universities in this county. Pierce College, a public community college, has two campuses, in Steilacoom and Puyallup. Washington State University also has an agriculture research center located in Puyallup. Tacoma Community College, Clover Park Technical College, Bates Technical College, and the University of Washington, Tacoma Campus, are all located in Tacoma. Pacific Lutheran University is a private Lutheran university located in Parkland (west of Puyallup); University of Puget Sound, is a private liberal arts university in Tacoma. Joint Base Lewis-McChord is a large Army and Air Force base located west of Puyallup. Many of the soldiers assigned to JBLM choose to stay in the area after they complete their service.

Though our congregation is majority white, and our racial diversity is limited, we are intentional about welcoming all people. We are also aware that true inclusion means more than open doors—it involves listening, learning, and actively building relationships across lines of difference.

Politically and culturally, our congregation tends toward moderation. We value compassion, justice, and humility more than partisanship, and we hope to be a place where people from different perspectives can come together in faith. We seek a leader who can navigate this nuance with wisdom and grace.

6. Leadership and Staff

First Presbyterian is served by a staff of one full time and five part time employees: Transitional Pastor (FT), Youth Director, Office Manager, Choir Director, Worship Accompanist, and Activity Time/Prayer Ground Attendant. We also have volunteers serving as the Music Ministries Coordinator, Bell Choir Conductor, Bell Choir Administrator, the Health Ministries team, sound and media team, and the financial team. The staff is friendly, skillful, and collaborates well with one another. Regular meetings and conversations provide a place for healthy communication, innovation in ministry, and problem solving as needed. The current staff is committed to supporting the Session in their exploration and vision for the future, and to meeting the needs of the congregation and current programs during this transitional season. The congregation is excited to welcome a new installed pastor to help lead them in growing mission and vitality as they inhabit this beautiful space and seek to bless their community through both the church building, and the serving hearts and hands of the people.

In conjunction with two other churches, we also have an associate pastor for pastoral care helping us each weekend who also leads worship quarterly. We also have a professional hospital chaplain who is active in our congregation and helps in worship and children's ministry.

Session: The business of the church is conducted at regular monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of each month and at specially called meetings. There are nine Elders who serve a three-year term on Session. Each Elder also serves as moderator or member of at least one committee

Deacons: The nine members of the Board of Deacons, each elected to a three-year term, provide services of care and compassion to the congregation and beyond. Deacons meet monthly on the second Tuesday. In caring for the congregation, Deacons serve communion monthly in worship service, on special occasions, and individually to those who are homebound.

Cradle Roll and Beyond is a ministry of love to children under three and to young adults. Deacons oversee Food Bank donations and Outreach Meals for those in need. The Health Ministries team coordinates with our Parish Nurse and keeps our Hygiene Closet supplied. Deacons enable Prayer Chain requests through email or by phone calls. Deacons show compassion by providing receptions following memorial services, sunshine activities of cards and flowers, and visitation of those with special needs. In addition, they coordinate special events during the year including the Remembrance Breakfast, and ECEAP/Bates Preschool Christmas Gifts.

Our pastor leads worship, moderates Session, provides pastoral care, is involved in children's ministries, advises our Board of Deacons, is an ex-officio member of the nominating committee, and connects us with many community and presbytery groups.



7. Facilities and Finances

Located near the downtown core of Puyallup, Washington, our neighborhood is both commercial and residential. The church is a striking landmark. An “A-frame” building located near central services and the original high school. Several elementary schools and two junior high schools are located within walking distance. Downtown Puyallup is home to several churches.

Our facility is contained in one unit which includes the sanctuary, fellowship hall, education wing, the nursery, and the office spaces. There is also a fenced playground which is used by our children and the preschool housed in our building. Sharing our building is an important mission of FPC. The ECEAP/Bates Preschool is housed at our facility. Breakfast and lunch for the students are prepared and served by the school staff daily. Other community groups using the building are: AA, Al-Anon, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Taking Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS), ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics), PVMC (Puyallup Valley Music), Step up to Life, and TALC (Tacoma Area Literacy Council).

First Presbyterian's budget was negatively impacted during the Covid years. Several major donors passed away and a few families moved away. Covid funding from the federal government helped to cover the gap and the church ran balanced budgets through 2023. During the 2024 budget planning process (August 2023), the Session voted to give the Personnel and Finance Committee the ability to withdraw funds from the Endowment Funds in order to balance the 2024 budget. During 2024, \$30,000 was withdrawn. The good news is that even though there have been fewer "giving units" in 2024 and 2025, the pledged amount has remained steady.

Our budget is like church budgets everywhere – aspirational. We look to our Lord to provide us with the funds to keep our doors open and the worship inviting. This congregation has an advantage: we do not have any mortgages on our building. Because the church owns its building facility outright, the central expenses are staff and maintenance. FPC's 2025 budget has \$234,000.00 in income and \$328,600.00 in expenses. Our Session has prayerfully approved the withdrawal of \$94,500.00 from our Endowment funds to cover the 2025 shortfall. The Endowment Fund currently sits at just over \$1,000,000. All committees are working to keep costs down without cutting ongoing programs or projects. We hold as high priority to employ our four part time employees, senior Pastor, and two contracted services (custodial and lawn care).

Always, the Lord has been with us as we go through the lean years and the fat ones. We will depend on Him as we look for our next pastor.

8. Discerning Our Strengths and Challenges

Our Strengths



Given its location in downtown Puyallup, and its distinctive architecture, the church is a landmark in this community. Over the years, a number of organizations have rented or have been granted space here, such as twelve step programs, piano teachers, ECEAP preschool, and Freezing Nights. Families in this area have been welcomed at our worship, and have stayed through generations. Parents bring their children, then their grandchildren, and their great grandchildren. Many members have been part of this church their entire life. The congregation is often seen as an extended family.

A number of pastors and associate pastors have led our congregation over the years. Most settle in and become part of the family. Some have stayed with us for more than 20 years.



Service to our fellow members and the community has always been a primary focus. We offer scholarships to our graduating high school students and our college students. We take communion to our members who cannot come to worship. We give rides to church to people from Luckett House, a mental health facility in the area, and folks who live in adult family homes.

We also understand ourselves to be a connectional church and are very active in presbytery functions. Both our pastors and our elders over the years have been active at all levels of presbytery and we have hosted presbytery in our congregation in the past year. We are very active members of Olympia Presbytery.

In the community, we join with four other churches in our area for our annual Faith in Action weekend, where we do a variety of projects, such as helping non-profit organizations by doing yard work around their buildings, creating personal care bags and quilts for those facing a crisis, and putting together kits of furniture at the Furniture Bank followed by a shared meal and worship service.

Some continuing projects are weekend bags of food for our ECEAP students and the Bags of Grace. We offer Soundview Camp and Mission Trip scholarships. We participate in the denomination's four offerings, and we promote the Giving Catalog.

Our Challenges

We like to think we are a welcoming church, that we make sure we greet all newcomers, no matter what we may perceive their situation is. Recently, a member raised the question of "what does welcoming look like?" It was agreed that we will want to continue this discussion to ensure that we are meeting people where they are when they visit.

Attracting new members has been a challenge. We have many older people in our congregation, and few young families. We have tried having alternative worship services, we have incorporated praise music into our morning worship, and currently, we live stream the service. We continue to have the question: "what can we do to increase our membership?"

9. Listening to the Congregation



In preparation for calling a new pastor, the Mission Study team convened a Town Hall on May 18, 2025 to ask essential questions to the congregation. In a separate focus group, the young people in the church were asked the same questions and their responses were folded into the broader conversation. The conversation was robust and the following summarizes how the congregation is thinking about our church and its future.

How would we describe our church to someone new?

Participants described our church as welcoming and caring. With an emphasis on service, the First Presbyterian Church members note that we are in transition, and this is a time of change. They seem focused on children and young families - both the ones we currently have and ones who might join us in the future. People seem to feel included in this church. Members and friends see us as a family. We are a scripture-based church that is socially involved in our community. Many mentioned enjoying the good music.

What does it mean to us that we are a Matthew 25 church?

Town Hall participants see being a Matthew 25 church as both a way to be and a way to take action. Members noted that being intentionally inclusive and welcoming is an important way to live out the tenets of Matthew 25. The second way is by taking action to serve others. Our connection to community service, prison missions, and food programs were all seen as important ways to live out Matthew 25 principles. There is still more work to do to ensure we have a shared understanding of all the aspects of being a Matthew 25 church.

Two phrases that stood out were:

- If someone is in need we don't hesitate to open our arms.
- We care for all people regardless of beliefs, spirituality, economic conditions, sexual orientation, or demographic traits.



Where do we see ourselves in 3 - 5 years?

Town Hall participants have an ambitious vision for the next 3-5 years here at First Presbyterian. They are interested in establishing a clear vision and then expect to have made significant progress on that vision by Year 3. Some parts of the vision that were suggested include having a new pastor installed, using the church facility in more ways to serve those in need, offering alternative services, having more young families join, re-establishing Sunday school, and possibly connecting to local schools. Vacation Bible School was mentioned by several people and many people expressed an interest in

deepening our connection to the community by being involved with food programs and clothing banks etc.

What do we want to see change or what should we not do?

Members are adamant that our congregation stay open to change, think creatively, and ensure that we remain financially solvent. Participants want us to be willing to try new things and not just continue doing things because they've always been done a certain way. Others were concerned that we could lose our way and become exclusive and complacent.



10. Moving Forward in Hope

In 2023 and 2024, our church went through a strategic planning process called Project Regeneration. Preceding this process, congregants read Sailboat Church by Joan Gray together and then worked together to generate options for the future of our church. Of the main ideas to be identified, changing our ministry was a central theme. The next step resulted in 31 ideas for how to implement this concept. Those 31 ideas are encapsulated in these 7 ideas:

Ministry Ideas	Group Responsible
Work with community organizations to seek out more community outreach - helping seniors	Mission Committee /Deacons
An afterschool place for students to gather for fellowship, tutoring, a safe place	Christian Education/ Youth-Young Adult leader

A ministry that involves young adults in how we worship - energy and ideas - music, outings, outreach	Christian Education /Congregational Worship Life/Youth-Young Adult leader
Advocate more on homelessness, hunger, medical care issues.	Mission Committee/Congregational Worship Life
Outreach to our seniors. What is needed to help our seniors.	Deacons
Many educators in our family - tutoring for Meeker Elementary students	Christian Education
Help young people that have aged out of foster care	Mission Commission

Building on the ideas from Project Regeneration and our strong history, we wish to provide a place where current members along with new young adults, youth and their families can learn how to live out God's purposes for their lives and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

We are a strong presence in central Puyallup surrounded by families. We are located near many schools and a community college. We are surrounded by churches, small businesses, parks, and a library. Our central location presents an amazing opportunity to reach out to young families, youth and their families and young adults. This demographic used to be a major part of our church.

Our Session believes the path forward is hiring a new Pastor to focus on the growth and vibrancy of our church. Based on recent Town Halls and an Associate Pastor search in 2020, we know that we want to be of service to our community and welcoming to everyone. Our congregation has shown support for this path forward through each of our “vision for the future” activities over several years. Our leadership feels now is the “critical moment” to act.



Final Reflections

As we prepare to call our next pastor, this Mission Study offers a strong and honest picture of who we are, where we've been, and where we hope to go. It highlights our deep roots in the Puyallup community, our enduring commitment to service, and our desire to grow in faith, outreach, and vitality.

In reviewing this document, the following reflections and recommendations are offered to help both the Pastor Nominating Committee and potential candidates engage with our mission in a realistic and hopeful way:

Vision vs. Execution Readiness

We are eager to welcome more young families, grow in vitality, and deepen community partnerships. However, we also recognize that this growth will require time, focused energy, and new leadership. Our church is sustained by a faithful core of members, many of whom are older adults. Realistically, carrying out bold visions will require developing younger leadership, expanding volunteer capacity, and creating space for

innovation. A new pastor will need both encouragement and support as we work together to match our aspirations with the day-to-day steps of transformation.

Organizational Flexibility

We celebrate our history of adapting to change—from structural renovations to becoming a Matthew 25 congregation. At the same time, we acknowledge that some systems or traditions may need to evolve further for us to grow. We plan to continue open conversations about “letting go” of certain habits or structures to make room for new approaches.

Clarify the Role We’re Hiring For

The pastors who have thrived in our congregation have been caring, grounded, and relational. Long-term relationships and trust matter deeply to us. As we enter this next season, we seek a pastor who is both a spiritual shepherd and a strategic leader. Ideally, someone who can honor our history while helping us grow into our future.

We value strong preaching rooted in scripture, a collaborative spirit, and a heart for the community. The ideal candidate will have the ability to engage people of all ages, support innovation, and lead with humility, joy, and courage. We are ready to follow a leader who listens well, loves people deeply, and calls us to live out our faith in action.

Financial Sustainability and Stewardship Planning

Our endowment offers a cushion, but long-term financial health will require intentional planning. With fewer giving units and some recent budget draws, stewardship will be a key area for future leadership and lay collaboration.



Cultural and Generational Connection in Worship

Our current worship is warm, musical, and in the Reformed tradition. As we seek to engage unchurched people and younger families, it may be helpful to assess whether our worship style resonates with the community we hope to reach.

Community Awareness of Our Presence

We have strong partnerships and a heart for service. Still, we wonder whether people in Puyallup—especially those not connected to a church—know who we are and what we offer. We seek to strengthen our visibility through storytelling, digital outreach, signage, and partnerships that invite new people into our life together.

Summary

This is a hopeful and pivotal moment in the life of First Presbyterian Church of Puyallup. We are grateful for our legacy, energized by our mission, and ready to welcome a pastor who can walk beside us in both challenge and possibility. These reflections are invitations to be honest, bold, and faithful as we move forward together in Christ.

Resources

Source documents: Puyallup First Presbyterian 2020 Associate Pastor mission study, Spiritual Gifts 101 survey, FPC Project Regeneration Report 2024

Mission Studies: Immanuel Presbyterian, Bethany Presbyterian, West Side Presbyterian, Shepherd of the Hill

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/washington/pierce-county>

Puyallup First Presbyterian Church <https://fpcpuyallup.org>

Presbyterian Church (USA) <https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/research-services/demographic-report>

United States Census Bureau U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Pierce County, WA

Data USA Pierce County, WA | Data USA

Joint Base Lewis–McChord - Wikipedia

University of Puget Sound - Wikipedia

Pacific Lutheran University - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierce_College (Washington)