

First Presbyterian Church of Turlock

Mission Study Report

**An Accelerated Mission Study Inspired by the
Publication "The Sailboat Church"**

and

**Facilitated by the Rev. Joseph Moore of the
Presbyterian Foundation**

June 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Drafting a Mission Study is both a challenge and an opportunity. We know that anyone reading these pages will already realize that, but as we've embarked upon this task, it has been striking just how much changes outside the church have influenced our internal reality and practices: the prevalence of two wage-earner households; competition for charitable giving; competition for time on Sundays (e.g. sports, work) just to name a few are layered on top of the very real changes we have experienced at our church over the past 40-plus years. This layering has called us to look not just within, but also to view First Presbyterian Church of Turlock (FPC Turlock) within the context of mainline Protestant churches in the wider society.

We have been aided in this task by valued helpers and churches from our Presbytery who have recently undergone change. The Rev. Joseph Moore of the Presbyterian Foundation skillfully guided us through a two-day process in March 2024 that underlies much of our self-analysis. The Celtic Cross Church (Citrus Heights) shared its 2023 mission study, and the El Dorado County Federated Church (Placerville) allowed us to review their 2013 strategic planning document. Each was a gift which in our earliest days of writing brought helpful clarity and needed examples to our task. Our interim pastor, the Rev. Dr. Stephen Smith, who joined us in November 2023, has spent countless hours helping, facilitating, guiding and encouraging us through this time of transition and reflection.

Our process began in mid-March of 2023 when FPC Turlock's pastor, the Rev. Dr. Craig Wright, made the surprise announcement that he had accepted a call from another church. In the years immediately preceding that transition there had been growing signs that we needed to take a fresh look at what we were doing and how we were doing it. Our demographics, particularly in terms of the increasing age of our members, had changed significantly, and our financial challenges had become increasingly hard to miss. FPC Turlock is a situationally generous congregation. The challenge comes with general fund giving, the very thing which is vital to sustainability of a congregation. It is in this context that this Mission Study got underway.

THE MISSION STUDY PROCESS

After Rev. Wright left our church, the Session met with representatives of the Presbytery's Vitality in Ministry (VIM) Committee to learn about the process of calling a new pastor, including resources and processes used by other churches in the Presbytery which had recently undergone pastoral transitions. The Session then appointed 5 of its Elders to serve as a Next Steps Study Group (NSSG) to literally figure out "what's next for the church". The Next Steps workgroup is composed of Mark Aldax, Dan Hardesty, Priscilla Peters, John Sims and Pat Wallace. Parish Associate Wendy Warner served as staff to the workgroup. Elder Candace Peterson became part of NSSG in 2024.

The workgroup met with staff to review the church's calendar and began the work of evaluating processes that could be used to conduct a church-wide mission study. Team members considered "Project Regeneration", which was recommended by Maggie Harmon of the

Presbyterian Foundation, and read the books Appreciative Inquiry by David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney and The Sailboat Church by Joan Gray, each offering a distinct approach to examine the church's mission. The approach of The Sailboat Church, which was published by the Westminster John Knox Press in Louisville, KY, resonated with the workgroup. Copies of The Sailboat Church were shared more widely with deacons and other church members who were encouraged to read and reflect on the book. Concomitant with efforts by the Next Steps workgroup, an interim Pastor Nominating Committee (iPNC) was appointed, and an interim pastor, the Rev. Dr. Stephen Smith was hired to serve FPC Turlock beginning on Nov. 1, 2023 at a 60% time base.

In his discussions with our Presbytery's Vitality in Ministry (VIM) Committee, Interim Pastor Smith learned that the Presbyterian Foundation had led accelerated mission studies for churches in the Presbytery using the principles contained in The Sailboat Church. The Foundation was contacted and the Reverend Joseph Moore led our church in such a mission study workshop extending over two days, March 22 and 23, 2024. Extensive publicity, including written and oral announcements during Sunday worship, a description of the workshop in the monthly newsletter, encouragement from the pulpit and a robocall reminder went out in the two weeks preceding the event.

Thirty-seven congregants attended the March 22nd evening session and thirty-seven congregants attended the March 23rd daytime session. Two of the Friday attendees were not able to return for the Saturday session, but two new attendees joined the Saturday session so that the combined attendance for both days was a total of 39 individuals, representing roughly two-thirds of weekly worship attendance and an estimated 25% of the membership roll.

The Reverend Joseph Moore led those gathered in a number of thought provoking exercises and reflections. A Summary Slide Deck that he provided covering the work done by congregant groups at the workshop is attached to this report as Appendix #1. The remainder of this report will expand on the findings of these and other activities.

So how did FPC Turlock get to be the church it is today?

HISTORY, CAMPUS AND FACILITIES

Since the focus of this Mission Study is more concerned with the present and future, that is, who we are now, and where we feel called to go, we have elected to include more complete histories for both the City of Turlock and First Presbyterian Church of Turlock as Appendices 2 and 3 of this report. For purposes of this Mission Study it is important to acknowledge that FPC Turlock has a long and storied history, and during its 115+ years of existence, the church has evolved and adapted to changing times and membership.

We've worshiped in multiple locations in Turlock and been served by 18 different pastors during these 115 years. In a previous era not so long ago, we were known as the church of the swimming pool and of the chicken barbecue, but times have changed, and we have as well.

The swimming pool is now gone, paved over to make room for a larger parking lot, and the chicken barbecue is just a fond memory. For many Turlockers, we are better known today as the church that offers free tutoring for elementary age school children or as the church of the cocoa parties in recognition of the church's provision of free parking and a warm welcome around the firepit on cold Winter nights for people attending Turlock's "Christmas Tree Lane" (which is located just around the corner from the church.)

These and so many other parts of our heritage have all contributed to making us who we are today. FPC Turlock has strong historic ties to the denomination, and members have long participated actively in Presbytery committees.

The Presbyterian saints who preceded us have left us with a beautiful campus including the sanctuary, administration building/social hall complex and classroom building on 4.3 acres situated close to the eastern edge of Turlock. Especially noteworthy are the stunning Celtic Cross stained glass that adorns the rear of the sanctuary, and a recent remodeling project to bring the sanctuary restrooms into compliance with ADA requirements that also modernized them. The parking lot and surrounding sidewalks were also revamped to accommodate ADA requirements and facilitate safe access. Both of these ADA projects were funded by special fundraising campaigns. These were improvements we had long wanted to make in order for the campus to be more welcoming and accessible, and through the donation of both treasure and talent from within the congregation, both of these special projects were completed. The recent wiring of not only the sanctuary but all buildings on campus has brought FPC Turlock connectivity and the ability to better engage with people as our modern world requires.

Still, the age of our structures together with years of deferred maintenance and the ever-changing demands of technology find us with many challenges on the infrastructure side. Our Buildings and Grounds Committee has been busy in the recent past dealing with large plumbing and HVAC repairs, and major roof repairs and eventual replacement are clearly on the horizon. (A special "raise the roof" fundraising effort has just gotten underway.) In the area of technology, we have been blessed by a member who has taken the lead on our technical transformation, overseeing the wiring of buildings and purchase of relevant technology, but we recognize the need to find ways to do much more in the area of technology in order to meet new people, especially young, tech savvy people, where they are. For all the wonderful benefits afforded by Zoom and streaming capabilities, we see clearly that we are lagging in areas such as content creation and website maintenance.

WHO WE ARE TODAY: WHAT THE NUMBERS REVEAL ABOUT FPC TURLOCK

Size is a key determining factor for any church's programming and scope of activities. After several years of having our reported membership hover around the mid 200s--leading us to believe that we are a medium large-sized church--we have awakened to a sizable discrepancy between our perceived membership and our real/actual membership. At the start of 2024,

membership was recorded as 265. A close review of the roll, which got underway in January 2024 and which is still underway as of this writing, suggests that a more accurate membership number is likely closer to a range of 125-150. Whatever the number once the review is concluded and the Register reflects an accurate count, reduced membership numbers can help explain many of the challenges recently felt at FPC Turlock: why the same people are called on time after time to serve; why individuals long serving in key roles are beginning to feel weary; why some attendees elect not to become members because they know that the minute they join, they will be asked to serve in official roles; and why contributions, especially to the General Fund, have been trending lower.

In addition to becoming a smaller congregation, FPC Turlock has also become an older congregation. Many of the youth who grew up in the church have moved away, often in search of better job opportunities, and much of our recent growth has come from Covenant Living, a continuing care retirement community located not far from FPC Turlock and with whom we have developed close ties.

FPC Turlock remains a healthy church by so many measures of vitality. That we have continued believing we are a measurably larger church than has become our reality, however, has encouraged us to keep acting like we remain the church we once were. Bringing our expectations into better alignment with our reality should smooth and help guide our path forward. This will require making choices about priorities, and which activities to continue along with deciding which can no longer be supported.

Here is some demographic data for FPC Turlock:

- Average in-person weekly attendance at worship ranges from 65-70; average weekly online views increase those numbers by approximately 45 viewers weekly.
- Age of members is heavily skewed to those over 40: 46% are 70 or older; 20% are in the 56-70 age range; 21% are in the 41-55 age range; 10% are 26-40; and 2% are 25 or under.
- Of members, 57% are women, and 43% men.
- Youth involved in the congregation include 11 in high school; 12 in middle school; and 11 in elementary school or younger for a total of 34
- Racial/ethnic distribution shows FPC Turlock to be a predominantly White congregation (239), with the next highest count being 17 members of Middle Eastern/North African heritage. This reflects the large Assyrian and Armenian populations who live in Central California's Central Valley. Of the remaining members, 5 are of Black/African American or African background; 3 are Hispanic/Latino/a; and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian.

Finances are another important and revealing measure for a church. Since FPC Turlock's finances are dealt with extensively in the section on Finances, we are not repeating them here.

WHAT WE DO NOW: OUR ACTIVITIES AS AN EXPRESSION OF OUR CONGREGATIONAL VALUES

Core values identified at FPC during the Mission Acceleration workshop with Joseph Moore include:

- **Belonging:** feeling connected to and liked by others
- **Compassion:** feeling sympathy, care or concern for others
- **Fellowship:** feeling a meaningful connection to a group of people
- **Helping:** taking care of others and meeting their needs
- **Spiritual Growth:** seeking connection to a higher purpose
- **Tradition:** respecting an established way of how things have been done



Where education had once been a priority at an earlier time in the life of FPC Turlock, with numerous congregants involved in various education-related careers, “fellowship” now seems to better describe FPC Turlock’s current church emphasis. This transition is probably not a surprise given the 14-year tenure of Rev. Dr. Craig Wright for whom the preparation and sharing of food was not just something he loved doing but an expression he practiced as a form of ministry. Until the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted so many of our lives and routines, a Bible study was a constant in FPC’s programming, taking place on Sunday mornings and/or Wednesday evenings. Today the weekly Men’s Fellowship typically offers a devotion, and the monthly Presbyterian Women (PW) meeting offers a formal theme-based Bible study. During the Mission Study Acceleration workshop, a return to the weekly offering of an adult Bible study was cited as a desire. The Christian Education Committee is actively exploring options to initiate a Bible study in Fall of 2024 that would meet weekly following worship, to be led by participants on a rotating basis.

Mapping church activities to FPC Turlock's core values reveals a range from **Helping** as the most frequently named value to **Tradition** as the least frequently mentioned value. The rank ordering based on correlating activities with core values results in the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 st | Helping |
| 2 nd | Belonging |
| 3 rd | Compassion |
| 4 th | Fellowship |
| 5 th | Spiritual Growth |
| 6 th | Tradition |

This list suggests further insights about FPC Turlock.

Helping: both individually and collectively, FPC Turlock is a caring body that reaches out to and engages with one another as well as with those outside of our immediate circle. FPC Turlock's tutoring ministry is an example of outreach beyond our immediate circle. This ministry creates an intergenerational community among tutors and students as well as providing a service opportunity for our own and other senior high students.

Belonging: among the places where connection and enjoying the company of others can best be seen is in the Men's and 2nd Friday Fellowship groups. Another healthy indicator is passing the peace during worship, a time when it takes the organ to call us back into worship as people are so happy to be sharing the peace of Christ! This is a congregation that also enjoys celebrating milestones like big birthdays and anniversaries.

Compassion: this value underpins both Helping and Belonging; one meaningful expression is the special meals prepared during times of need and the distribution of emergency need gift cards.

Fellowship: from work days on campus to short-term mission trips and post-worship fellowship, members enjoy one another's company and the feelings of community derived from working and being together.

Spiritual Growth: powerful sermons and special services like the Tenebrae Service on Maundy Thursday and the Service of Remembrance (Tidings of Comfort) held close to Thanksgiving stand out as especially meaningful. For our youth, summer camp is frequently recalled as an important and life-changing time of spiritual formation. This has occurred at Zephyr Point and Calvin Crest, and most recently FPC Turlock youth have been re-establishing what had been a long-time connection with Calvin Crest.

Tradition: an appreciation for tradition can be seen in ways as varied as the preservation of FPC Turlock's beautiful sanctuary and the annual greening of the sanctuary at Christmas to retention of the Confession of Sin in the order of worship, the latter being something that was part of the traditional worship service and which has been retained in the single worship service held since Spring 2023.

Changing times, and the lengthy list of activities carried on by FPC Turlock, obliges us to ask whether we are attempting to do too much. When a single wage-earner was enough for a family to thrive, finding volunteers to help at church was relatively easy, but changing economics have obliged us to fill gaps by hiring people to assume duties formerly performed by volunteers. Changing technology, and the demand for a specialized skill set to implement desired technology, is also a factor. These changes are compounded at FPC Turlock by the aging of our congregation. Older parishioners don't always have the energy they once did, and while they are often eager to turn tasks over to younger congregants, younger families are considerably fewer in number and are typically already stretched.

One change Session recently made was to reduce the popular weekly Big Wednesday meals to a once-a-month, Fourth Wednesday meal. While the reduced frequency appears more sustainable in terms of having sufficient volunteers to prepare the meals (without also over-taxing specific individuals), corollary activities that were scheduled around the Big Wednesday dinners have had a harder time adjusting. Efforts to replace the Wednesday evening Bible study are underway and have been described elsewhere. For the children and youth, Wednesday Kids activities were directly affected by the pastor's departure in 2023 because his spouse, who led self-generated programming for children and youth that included musical productions, left at that time also. A dedicated team of helpers kept activities going throughout the 2023-24 program year. For now, the Christian Education Committee continues to seek a path for children's activities beyond Sunday School. The hiring of a new youth director and assistant youth director—underway as this report is being written—speaks to the commitment of the congregation to our youth and the faith community of the future. It is our hope and expectation that with fresh leadership, programming for youth can be renewed and reinvigorated. We would like to see greater visibility for youth within the church, and we are hopeful the new leaders will explore possibilities of collaboration with nearby Presbyterian churches and/or other churches with whom the PC(USA) has reciprocal agreements as a way of adding new energy to our youth programming.

EMPATHY MAPPING

During the Mission Study gathering with Rev. Joseph Moore, one of the exercises involved having each of the nine tables in the room assigned a designation as either participant, prospect, or recipient. From the perspectives of these designations, tables were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What do they hear, see, feel, say?
- What objections do they have?
- What are their reasons to engage?

Inviting congregants to think about perspectives and experiences they might not ordinarily be called to think about—effectively to step into the shoes of another—is, as its name implies, one of the main reasons for engaging in this kind of exercise. Potential cautions arise because not every voice is heard. Nonetheless, empathy mapping can be helpful in confirming areas of strength (e.g., where a single perspective surfaces repeatedly), and perhaps even more significantly by identifying areas of perceived need. Often these are things that appear in the margins and likely affect smaller numbers of people, yet they are still real. The question is how and whether FPC Turlock feels called to respond to these needs.

The following is a summary of the empathy mapping exercise conducted on March 23 - 24, 2024:

	Participants/Members	Prospects	Recipients
Think and feel	well fed, welcome, likes sermons & people, loves fellowship, fine friendship, aware of the elderly, comfortable, accepted, same old stuff	too formal, adequate, didn't know; I hope this is a good home to worship God, welcome, familiar & nice people	welcomed, not always included, overwhelmed; grateful, uncertainty
See and hear	music, positive support, positive preaching, worship, busy campus, older adults, people conversing & sharing, really great sermons that make you think, fabulous choir, great stained glass, smile & greet, go to people that are new, happy for monitor/music, prayer, sermon, information, familiar people, conflict	conversations, music, laughing, old, no kids, sparse people, sincerity, talking, friendly people, good utilization of the building	sanctuary/beautiful campus, fellowship, accepting & caring congregation, sermons, music, welcoming group, older congregation, laughter, acceptance, conversation

Say and do	good works, caring & nice, expresses kind words, helps with projects, appreciate, offers prayers, introduces herself, see somebody new & fresh, participation in congregation, willing to help out, attend fellowship to eat and connect with people, exchange recipes	Is this my church? They return or they leave; faith, food & people, happy to meet you	participates in worship, thankful & grateful; wants more connection or may leave; how can we help; they say we love & care about each other
Objections	too much work & too few people; not finding what s/he is looking for in the church or not knowing how to participate in the church's system; object to conflict or the conflict, no contemporary music, cliques; predominantly aged population; nothing in common with others; too small a group of people	clicky, unfriendly, not welcome/feeling left out, no objections, don't overspread your income	no one near my age, hard to break into an established group, don't want to be asked for anything more; traditions, fear of judgment, hesitancy to reach out to strangers
Reasons to engage	I want to participate, I need friendships, I am called by God, long-term commitment, lots of different activities, friendliness, fellowship, feel welcome, mission throughout the world, interested in programs listed in bulletin	friendly, get involved/what can I do to be helpful; is this where I want to attend on a regular basis?	someone invited them, want to be a part of a community; community, continue to receive services, fellowship with people you want to spend time with

While there appears to be a preponderance of favorable responses in the FPC experience, there are other comments suggesting specific areas of need as felt and described by some. For example, congregants expressed an overall sense of friendliness and welcome, but mention was also made of cliques, difficulty breaking into established groups and/or not fitting in; occasional low level conflict; being overworked/asked too often to do something; and dissatisfaction with the style of worship, especially with regard to the less formal, more contemporary style of worship FPC Turlock offered for nearly 30 years until Rev. Wright's

departure. Each of these areas presents its own unique set of challenges. In general, we have elected to elaborate only on those critiques which have received continuing discussion. Some/several of these show up in the SWOT categories. For those which were mentioned and not discussed by the larger group, we have elected not to delve further in this report beyond listing them here.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT)

A brief note before commenting on the SWOT categories: We are all familiar with the traditional vocabulary of the four SWOTs and acknowledge the practicality of using them here. As we have worked on this mission study, however, we have frequently found ourselves reflecting that depending on the lens we use to view the items we associate with each of the categories, placement varies. For instance, a “threat” can actually be an “opportunity” in disguise, and even a “strength” can be viewed as a “weakness,” as occurs in our discussion of strengths. As Christians we prefer a term like “challenges.” God provides so that we are able to work on these challenges.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by congregants at the Mission Study gathering on March 22-23 of 2024 are summarized below, listed in order of significance to participants.

Strengths

- A. Fellowship
- B. Generosity
- C. Reformed theology/Presbyterianism
- D. Inclusive/open to change
- E. A literate and inquisitive congregation (We read)
- F. A beautiful and versatile space

Weaknesses

- A. Tradition and rootedness
- B. Complacency and exhaustion
- C. One form of worship (traditional)
- D. Limits on our ability to welcome and include others
- E. Lack of robust Sunday school
- F. “We’ve always done it this way” attitude
- G. Deferred maintenance
- H. Inflexible Sanctuary interior

Opportunities

- A. Needs that exist in the community
- B. Unique population groups (university students, retirement community)
- C. Preschool and vacation bible school needs
- D. Outreach (at places and to groups like Farmer's Market and LGBTQ)
- E. To tell our city our church story
- F. To share our campus space
- G. To accept, as a congregation, that we can only do so much
- H. To do more in the mental health/physical health space (with a group home right next door)

Threats

- A. Our divided society
- B. Fewer and fewer Christians
- C. Fundamentalism versus order and process
- D. People are busy
- E. People don't trust institutions
- F. Fear and hopelessness

Strengths

As he prepared to wrap up the accelerated Mission Study workshop with FPC Turlock, Rev. Moore remarked that at many of the churches where he has offered these Mission Study sessions, by the end of the second day attendees are often glazing over and typically pretty anxious for the gathering to conclude. By contrast, in Turlock he sensed a continuing engagement and enthusiasm for the task at hand.

Indeed, and happily so, many of the qualities that were identified as strengths at FPC Turlock are indicators of congregational vitality: the valuing and pleasure of being together, whether at work or play (fellowship); creative and talented members and friends who are willing and able to make special projects happen (generosity); openness to change and willingness to adapt to challenges (inclusivity); the gifts of our reformed theology and Presbyterianism generally; and congregants' inquisitiveness, willingness and desire to expand their horizons through information and learning (we read). This is not to gloss over strengths like tradition and rootedness, and a fixed sanctuary space held to be both beautiful and versatile as well as inflexible. Strengths like these are very much a function of individual preference, so that while a strength in the view of some, they are experienced as weaknesses by others.

As noted by Rev. Moore, FPC Turlock's acknowledged strengths appear to offer good bones for the future. Building on those strengths will call for energy, intelligence, imagination and love, the very commitments Presbyterians make when called to service.

Weaknesses

To be sure, FPC Turlock faces many of the same challenges faced by other mainline Protestant churches, including most notably an aging congregation and declining numbers (so fewer hands to help and a smaller financial base to propel us forward).

One weakness on which we are particularly focused relates to style of worship. It is a big challenge that demands attention because it touches on so many other aspects of FPC Turlock's life: the beautiful sanctuary, which is noted to be both versatile and inflexible; music, where some prefer tradition and formality (it's the way we've always done it), with choir and pipe organ, while others want the more upbeat and informal presentation offered by the singing of praise songs to the accompaniment of a guitar and song leaders; and liturgy, with the confession of sin a preference of some, while others would prefer that it not be included so more focus could be placed on other aspects of worship. The aging of our congregation factors into preference for style to some degree, but not entirely. While younger people often prefer the praise style and older parishioners frequently prefer the more traditional style of service to which they have long been accustomed, the situation is not that simple or clear-cut.

For the past 30 years, FPC Turlock had offered both styles of worship, an early morning (initially an 8:30 and more recently 9 a.m.) "contemporary" praise service, and a separate (11 a.m.) traditional service. When the former pastor left, the praise service departed with him as the pastor had been the lead musician for praise music. FPC Turlock regrouped with a single service at 10 a.m. immediately after his departure. This was a practical response given our budgetary reality and the need to rely upon pulpit supply. The fellowship of being all together in a single service also offered an initial boost for the time of transition. But as the liturgy settled into a traditional service with only occasional nods to the practices of the former praise service, several of the former praise service attendees have found themselves longing for the style of worship that had become so meaningful for them. That individual church-goers seek a style of worship that nourishes their souls is not a surprise. The challenge, and especially for smaller churches such as ours, is how to provide. Does a church focus on one style at the expense of another? Does a church alternate styles, or does a single church attempt to offer a blended service with a little something for everyone? A second unexpected change following the former pastor's resignation—the recently announced retirement of our music director—means starting with a blank slate. Since we are blessed to be served by a skilled interim pastor, rather than being overwhelmed, that blank slate provides us the opportunity to think creatively about how we might transform worship at FPC Turlock.

A webinar presented May 8, 2024 by author and contemplative Brian McLaren at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. as part of its McClendon Scholar Program is especially timely for our situation. Some of McClaren's points go well beyond changing worship styles, but changes in our worship style will be an immediate and necessary first step for FPC Turlock as we move towards our future.

Opportunities

The list of opportunities identified for FPC Turlock suggests so many possibilities, but perhaps the most compelling is the opportunity to better understand our new identity as a smaller church.

What are the implications of being a smaller church? How must we transform in order to live into the potential of our new, smaller reality? Do we start with existing activities and cut, or do we begin afresh, listing the activities that will enable us To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known? Prioritizing some activities over others, and even eliminating some activities altogether is hard, yet we recognize the need to accept that as a congregation, we can only do so much. The first step appears to be discerning the direction we feel called to move, and then deciding upon priorities. Opportunities noted on our list, such as serving under- and/or unserved populations or groups, need to be balanced against our smaller size.

The opportunity to collaborate with another small church in our region suggests a way for us to build on our strengths while acknowledging our smaller size. Elsewhere the example of collaborating on youth activities has been mentioned. Sharing a pastor with another small church in our region so that together, we could offer a larger compensation package, and in turn attract a larger pool of candidates, is another.

An additional opportunity relates to space utilization. With a campus of more than 4 acres, some of which is still open space, FPC Turlock could explore revenue-generating possibilities for both existing buildings and open space.

Threats, and Hope

While acknowledging that the issues identified as Threats during our March gathering are absolutely real and challenging, we also believe these are the very kinds of things God calls us to address. As the world and societies continue to change, FPC Turlock and churches generally need to adapt and continue transforming themselves, just as they have since their earliest days.

As James K. Manley's lyrics in the final stanza of *Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness* (1975) so beautifully express,

You call from tomorrow; you break ancient schemes.

From the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams.

Our women see visions; our men clear their eyes.

With bold new decisions your people arise.

Finances of FPC Turlock

Finances are the lifeblood of any church. Church finances are also a topic many in the church do not wish to discuss because of sensitivities involved when discussing money, personal finances, and contributions to the church. Some have suggested that the condition of a church's finances are an indication of the congregational and operational health of that church. The Session of FPC Turlock believes that financial health is only one indicator of congregational and operational health and vitality. The values of the church, the activities undertaken by the church,

expenditure priorities, and how church members relate to and serve one another as well as the wider community are as important or sometimes even more important than a simple accounting of the money going in and out of the church coffers. In regards to FPC Turlock's overall health, the reader should review and consider not only the specific financial information that follows, but also the financial information within the context of other health indicators presented in other sections of this Mission Study Report.

FPC Turlock, the region in and around Turlock, and society as a whole have changed considerably over the 115 years of the church's existence. As the church's internal and external circumstances have changed, the church has had to change in order to adapt to evolving circumstances. The church's finances are no exception. They have evolved as the church has evolved.

The following information regarding the church's finances is intended to be a high level overview of financial changes and challenges over the last 4 years. Little value is seen in financial information prior to 2020 when Covid-19 first emerged. Covid-19 rearranged and reset society and church culture in ways we are still experiencing. We are now in a new normal and finances for the last few years seem to be the best reflection of that new normal. Consequently, information from the church's Annual Reports will be presented for the church's General Fund and Balance Sheets for the 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 years.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR FPC TURLOCK				
CALENDAR YEARS 2020 - 2024				
From FPC Turlock Annual Reports				
Compiled in June 2024				
CALENDAR YEAR	2020	2021	2022	2023
	GENERAL FUND	GENERAL FUND	GENERAL FUND	GENERAL FUND
Income*	\$392,580	\$339,937	\$364,722	\$324,886
Payroll Expenses	\$238,807	\$251,999	\$264,135	\$172,533
Other Expenses	<u>\$110,854</u>	<u>\$126,672</u>	<u>\$126,824</u>	<u>\$118,766</u>
Excess Income/Expenditures (-)	\$42,919	-\$38,734	-\$26,237	\$33,587
	BALANCE SHEET	BALANCE SHEET	BALANCE SHEET	BALANCE SHEET
ASSETS				
Restricted Donations	\$50,806	\$93,298	\$87,196	\$48,551
Operating Reserves	\$72,481	\$77,726	\$73,713	\$48,884
Other Assets**	<u>\$4,714,814</u>	<u>\$4,674,381</u>	<u>\$4,643,784</u>	<u>\$4,688,275</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$4,838,101	\$4,845,405	\$4,804,693	\$4,785,710
LIABILITIES				
Restricted Donations	\$50,806	\$97,939	\$83,468	\$29,687
Other Liabilities	\$5,441	\$4,345	\$3,508	\$2,886
Unrestricted**	<u>\$4,781,854</u>	<u>\$4,743,121</u>	<u>\$4,717,717</u>	<u>\$4,753,137</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$4,838,101	\$4,845,405	\$4,804,693	\$4,785,710

* Includes \$33,790 of Federal Payroll Protection Funds in 2020 only.

** Includes funds and values in accounts, land, buildings, furnishings.

Some comments about the finances table and its implications:

1. Except for 2022, contributions over this 4 year period have declined and annually have been less than what was received in 2020.
2. Income and expenditures in the General Fund have been balanced (and slightly revenue positive) over this 4 year period, largely due to personnel changes in 2023.
3. The 2023 year saw many personnel changes resulting in significantly decreased personnel costs:
 - a. The previous Pastor left at the end of April 2023. This resulted in the resignation of other church staff who were members of the Pastor's family and who decided to follow him to his new church.
 - b. An Interim Pastor was hired on November 1, 2023 at 60% time. Session decided on a part-time position due to downward trending contributions from the congregation.
 - c. The substantial reduction of personnel costs in 2023 allowed excess income to be realized in that year. Despite being "in the black" financially, the 4 year low in contributions in 2023 is concerning.
4. After taking note of the overall trends in organized religion, the experiences of other churches in our Presbytery, and the realities of our church's finances, the Session has discerned that FPC Turlock at this time is not able to recruit for a full-time Pastor due to fluctuating contributions in recent years. Additionally, Session is of the opinion that new and creative ways to provide pastoral leadership for our church need to be examined:
 - Approaching clergy in the area who might be receptive to a part-time position
 - Sharing a Pastor with another Presbyterian church in the area
 - "Federating" with a church that has reciprocity with the PC(USA)
 - Combining with another Presbyterian church
 - Creating a Pastor "circuit rider" concept for a group of area churches
 - Other "out of the box" creative ideas
5. What is not revealed by this chart is the overall generosity of the FPC Turlock congregation. For example, in 2021 total contributions of the congregation were \$509,961 for the year. A total of \$339,936 was donated to the General Fund and \$170,025 was donated for restricted purposes. The FPC Turlock congregation has always risen to the challenge for big ticket projects and repairs. The ADA projects cited earlier are recent examples of this special generosity.

Issues to Be Addressed In Preparation for Calling a Pastor

This Mission Study Report was designed to be an assessment of FPC Turlock as it exists today. As the Session works to build a consensus within the congregation, here are some key issues to be addressed:

1. Style of worship: traditional? blended? contemporary/praise? (Style pertains to liturgy as well as music)
2. Part-time versus full time pastor

3. What activities should the church prioritize, curtail, or end?
4. How do we adapt to becoming the smaller church that is our reality?
5. As an aging congregation, how do we balance serving and being served?

Appendices

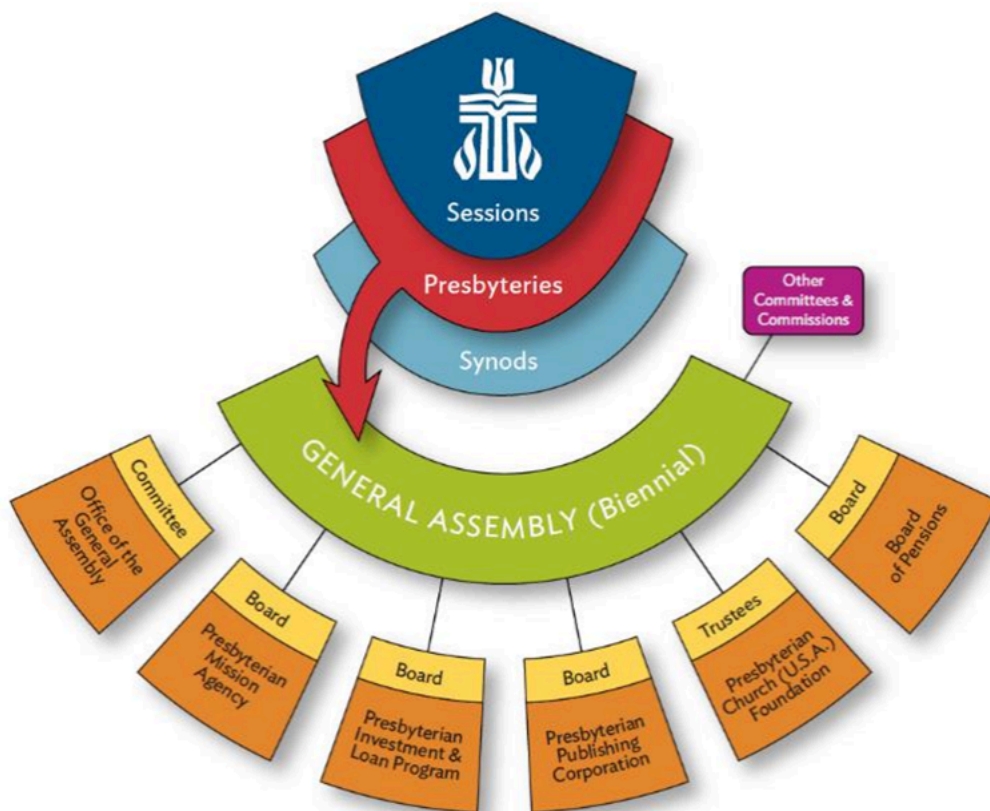
1. Summary Slide Deck created by the Rev. Joseph Moore from March 22-23, 2024
Mission Study Acceleration Process
2. Expanded History of Turlock, CA
3. Expanded History of First Presbyterian Church of Turlock, CA
4. List of Church Activities Categorized by Church (Core) Values

Appendix 1 Summary Slide Deck



MISSION ACCELERATION FPC TURLOCK, CA

IDENTIFY YOUR MISSION, BUILD YOUR PLAN, ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL



Presbyterian Foundation

A vital part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), the Foundation was established in 1799 and cultivates, attracts, and manages financial resources of individuals and institutions to further Christ's mission.



Bringing People and Mission Together



Objectives:

- ❖ what is the reason we are here?
 - ❖ Anxiety amidst pastoral transition, curiosity, we want this church to be around for a long time.
- ❖ what do we hope to accomplish?
 - ❖ Find consensus around mission and values to help with our Congregational Mission Study.



CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Presbyterian
FOUNDATION

What do we do at FPC Turlock? (Font is intentionally small)

Worship
 Benevolence Gift Cards
 4th of July Fireworks
 PW offerings
 Mission trip housing
 Community Garden
 Mission Fair
 TGM
 Daily Bread
 Short Term Mission Trips (1/yr)
 Tutoring Program
 AA Group hosting
 Eggstravaganza
 Porta Potty and Parking for Xmas Tree Event
 Online/retirement stream
 3x special offerings
 Prayer Shawls
 Christmas Gifts for kids
 Prayer ministry
 Voice Choir
 Bell choir
 Deacon support
 Funeral lunches
 Post Church Fellowship Team
 Bake Sale
 Men's Breakfast
 Cat Support (Ruthie) ☺
 PW
 Sunday School
 Youth Group
 2nd Friday
 Mindfulness Group
 Share space with another congregation
 Congregational Ride Share
 Rental Space
 Church Clean-up Days
 Youth Tech Team
 Shut in Communion
 Over 80 Lunch
 Church Recycling
 Moms and Dads Day Gifts
 Samaritans Purse Christmas Boxes
 Food Donations
 Veterans Celebration

Presbyterian
FOUNDATION

Do we do too much?

- ❖ Sense of the room...yes.
- ❖ Hard part is knowing what to leave, what to keep.
- ❖ Sometimes you have to say no to some things in order to say yes to other things.
- ❖ Driving question, “What core value is driving program ____?”

Empathy Mapping

- ❖ Prospects, Members, Recipients.
 - ❖ What do they hear, see, feel, say?
 - ❖ What objections do they have?
 - ❖ What are their reasons to engage?
- ❖ See Pat and Pricilla’s Notes for an excellent Empathy Mapping Summary

Empathy Mapping

- ❖ This is a useful exercise because it invites people to think about perspectives and experiences that most wouldn't ordinarily consider.
- ❖ One of the main drawback to empathy mapping exercises like this lies in the fact that not every 'voice' in the church was present. **What voices weren't at the retreat? (families with children and youth appeared to be underrepresented...)**

SWOT:

- ❖ S: why are you excited to be here?
- ❖ S: what do you do exceptionally well?
- ❖ S: what are your most valuable assets?
- ❖ W: where do you fall down?
- ❖ W: what are the biggest barriers to change?
- ❖ O: what could you do completely differently?
- ❖ T: what scares you the most today? about the future?

STRENGTHS



WEAKNESSES



OPPORTUNITIES



THREATS



Blessed be the Lord,
for he has heard the
sound of my pleadings.
The Lord is my
strength and my shield;
in God my heart trusts;
so I am helped, and my
heart exults, and with
my song I give thanks
to him. - Psalm 28 6-7

MISSION ASSESSMENT



CONGREGATIONAL VALUES





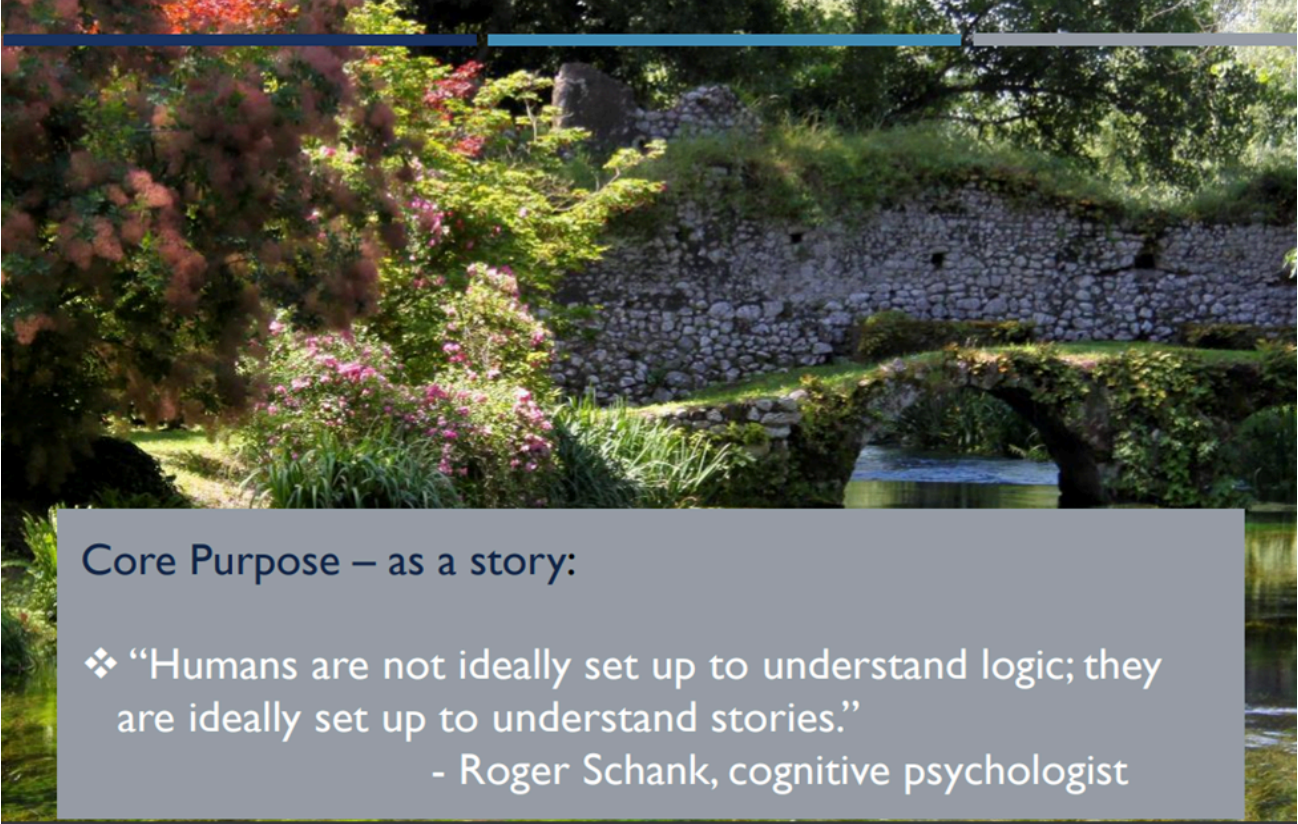
Core Purpose:

- ❖ our reason for being
- ❖ an effective purpose reflects the idealistic motivation for doing your work; whereas you might achieve a goal or complete a strategy, you cannot fulfill a purpose – it is the guiding star on the horizon

Presbyterian 



Presbyterian 
FOUNDATION



Core Purpose – as a story:

❖ “Humans are not ideally set up to understand logic; they are ideally set up to understand stories.”

- Roger Schank, cognitive psychologist

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TURLOCK, CA IS...

FPC exists: To Know Christ and to Make Him Known.

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment is the law is the greatest?” He answered them, “***You shall love the Lord you God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.***’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘***You shall love your neighbor as yourself.***’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

- Matthew 22: 34-40

DOES THIS STILL RING TRUE?

There seemed to be some energy around the current mission statement. No need to rewrite something for the sake of rewriting it! I do think it might be a helpful exercise to compare the mission statement with the professed core values. If they don't fully line up...maybe tweak things.

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment is the law is the greatest?" He answered them, "***You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.***" This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: '***You shall love your neighbor as yourself.***' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

- Matthew 22: 34-40



GUIDING PURPOSE – PROPOSED: WE ARE...

FPC IS: "ENCOURAGING A COMMUNITY OF FAITHFUL BELIEVERS."

"GROWING A SPIRITUAL AND COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY.
ALWAYS REACHING OUT."

Other Core Purpose Statements:

- ❖ Providing friendship, compassion, and God's love
- ❖ A welcoming community of faithful believers
- ❖ Gratefully accepting your donations. 😊
- ❖ Experiencing Christ. Helping others to do likewise
- ❖ To share loving friendship and to grow our faith
- ❖ I left out the verbless statements.

WHAT'S NEXT... BUILD ON YOUR STRENGTHS, FOCUS ON OPPORTUNITY, EMBRACE PURPOSE AND ACT WITH FOCUS!



THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW...

Chose one **Big Achievable Goal** that the session can coalesce around for the next 12-18 months. (Other than...call a new pastor).



THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFORM...

What values inform who we are as FPC and what we do?

Are there things we need to stop doing, so we can more faithfully and impactfully say yes to what we should be doing?



THANK YOU

REV. JOSEPH MOORE, MINISTRY RELATIONS OFFICER
JOSEPH.MOORE@PRESBYTERIANFOUNDATION.ORG



Appendix 2

A Brief History of Turlock, California

Histories vary on how Turlock got its name; however, it is known that Turlock was founded in 1871 by John William Mitchell, a prominent grain farmer in the area. He ran large flocks of sheep throughout the area while buying land, and eventually he owned most of the present day Turlock area.

While Turlock grew to be a relatively prosperous and busy hub of activity throughout the end of the 19th century, it was not incorporated as a city until 1908. By that time intensive agricultural development surrounded most of the city; agriculture remains a major economic force in the Region.

Today, in the heart of California's Central Valley, Turlock is the second largest city in Stanislaus County with a population which has grown steadily from 13,992 in 1970 to over 71,000 today. In 1960, California State University, Stanislaus (CSUS), opened to students, helping to spur growth in the city as the university expanded. Turlock provides an unusual opportunity to combine a quality learning environment with relaxed living.

Cultural art experiences, sports activities, twelve parks, eight schools, a full range of medical facilities add to the attractiveness of Turlock. Also, the ability to be able to drive to such areas as the Mother Lode, San Francisco Bay area, Sierra Nevada/Yosemite National Park, Napa, Lake Tahoe, the state capital in Sacramento and Monterey Bay beaches add to the pleasure of living in Turlock.

Turlock is the home of the Stanislaus County Fair and hosts many events in its renovated downtown. Farmers market, music festivals, Christmas and July 4 th parades, lighting of the Christmas tree, National Day of Prayer breakfast are some of the highlights of Turlock's social events. Many clubs and organizations are represented in Turlock: Rotary, Kiwanis, Medic Alert headquarters, non-profit Emanuel Hospital and hospice, Salvation Army and United Samaritans to name a few.

Culturally, the area is home to large concentrations of various ethnic groups, particularly Sikhs, Mexican-Americans, Assyrians, Swedes and Portuguese.

The nickname "Heart of the Valley" was introduced in its earlier years. At one time, Turlock was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as having the most churches per-capita in the United States, partly attributable to a wide variety of ethnic churches established for a relatively small settler population.

Today there are more than 70 religious facilities represented in Turlock. Baptist, Nazarene, Episcopalian, Methodist, Lutheran, Assembly of God, Sikhs, various Assyrian churches, Baha'i, Buddhist, Catholic, Evangelical Covenant, Pentecostal, Jehovah Witness, and LDS are some of the denominations represented with Spanish, Assyrian, Portuguese services or churches

specific to these ethnicities. The Swedish introduced the Evangelical Covenant Church to Turlock which has split several times. Most notably, one of these splits developed Monte Vista Chapel, which is the largest non-denominational church in Turlock and is in close proximity to FPC.

The incorporated area of the City of Turlock encompasses 14.48 square miles and has an approximate population of 71,273 in 2023.

Appendix 3

History of the First Presbyterian Church of Turlock

In 1908 two Presbyterian congregations were formed in the Turlock, California area and began to organize officially. One was located in the center of Turlock and later became the First United Presbyterian Church of Turlock. The other was located on the west side of town and later became the Turlock Park Presbyterian Church.

First United Presbyterian Church of Turlock

On May 9, 1909 the Presbyterian Church of Turlock was officially organized in the Brethren Church at the intersection of Center and East Olive Streets. The Reverends Noble and Pitman led the service on that day and accepted twenty-eight members (twenty-three by letter of transfer and five by profession of faith). The Reverend John E. Blair became the first pastor of the Turlock church, and by July 1909 regular meetings were held in Broadway Hall at the corner of West Main and Broadway Streets.

At a congregational meeting on February 20, 1910 a resolution was adopted to incorporate under the name of First United Presbyterian Church of Turlock. The term of incorporation was for fifty years, and on March 11, 1910 the constitution and by-laws were adopted.

Church construction began right away, and the first communion service was held on December 10, 1910.

Turlock Park Presbyterian Church

On May 2, 1909, under the supervision of the Reverend Homer K. Pitman, the west side congregation organized under the name of Pioneer Presbyterian Church and met for two years at the Mitchell schoolhouse.

In April 1911, the congregation was authorized to change its name to Turlock Park Presbyterian Church. On May 31, 1911 the Reverend John E. Blair left the First United Presbyterian Church of Turlock to become the pastor of the Turlock Park Presbyterian Church. On July 22, 1911, the trustees, W.A. Lowe, D.L. Wolfe and the Reverend John E. Blair, incorporated the church.

Later in 1911 the Turlock Park Presbyterian congregation purchased a lot on the Lowe property at the corner of West Main and Faith Home Road and built a chapel measuring 24 by 36 feet.

First United Presbyterian Church

On May 14, 1916 the two congregations voted to petition the Presbytery for permission to combine both churches. They joined under the name First United Presbyterian Church of Turlock worshipping at the Palm and Crane Street location.

Improvements and additions came with time. Between 1919 and 1921 a manse was build next

to the church, and the church basement and kitchen were added. Then in 1950, under the pastorate of Reverend George Godfrey, major remodeling of the sanctuary, education rooms and façade was completed.

In 1955, under the pastorate of Reverend Frank Humberger, the congregation bought 4.3 acres of land on Berkeley Avenue. A worship center was planned, and in September the first unit of a four-part plan, a swimming pool, was completed. Forty-five youth met several times a week for worship, study and fellowship. One hundred people were involved in groups for study and action. The pool facility held many happy church events and fulfilled its intended mission by teaching Red Cross swimming lessons to hundreds of children and providing fellowship for families and Turlock's youth.

In March 1971, Reverend Al Opdyke was called to be the fifteenth pastor. In 1976 a sanctuary, choir room, nursery, social hall and office were completed on the Berkeley site. The social hall was named for George Voight, a long-time devoted member of the Church. At a later time a portable classroom building was moved behind the social hall to be used as a youth room.

Nancy M. Balding (Clegg) was called to be Assistant Pastor in 1981 and served until 1984. To comply with the Presbyterian Church reorganization, the church began operating in 1983 as the First Presbyterian Church of Turlock.

Reverend Al Opdyke departed in 1991. The church was divided about Reverend Opdyke leaving. Emotions were intense for many members and trust in each other and the system were fragile for many years. Before an interim pastor could be called, a consultant for conflict resolution conducted several meetings for the entire church family. Interim pastors, Reverends Harold N. England and Jack L. Eisel, pastored the church during the healing period.

In 1994, the Reverend Stephen Locke was called to be the sixteenth pastor. A new building fund began, and on September 7, 1997 construction of a Christian education building was initiated. As part of this project, the swimming pool was removed, and the parking lot was expanded. Reverend Nancy (Balding) Clegg was hired on a part-time basis to assist Reverend Locke with the senior and youth ministries while she continued her stated supply with Cortez Presbyterian Church. On June 7, 1998 the Lois V. Marsh Christian Education Building was dedicated. Lois was honored for her decades of work as the church's Sunday School Superintendent.

In January 2000, the Reverend Dr. Stephen Locke answered a new call and Reverend Raymond DeDoes served as interim pastor assisted by Reverend Nancy Clegg.

The seventeenth pastor, the Reverend Dr. Lorne Bostwick, was called in August 2002. He served this congregation until he resigned in April 2006. During Reverend Dr. Bostwick's tenure, the congregation began a Holy Conversations study to do long range strategic planning.

The project was completed and approved by Session in November 2006.

The Reverend Dr. Kevin Buchanan served as Interim Pastor from November 2006 until the Reverend Dr. Craig Wright accepted a call as the church's eighteenth pastor in March of 2009. Pastor Wright served until May of 2023 when he accepted another call.

The Reverend Dr. Stephen W. Smith has served as Interim Pastor since November of 2023, working in a 60% part time position due to the church's current financial position. The church's financial position is stable and all options for pastoral services (full-time, part-time, sharing, yoked) are likely to be researched as a new call is conducted.

Current paid staff consists of an interim pastor, tutoring director, administrative assistant, director of music, bookkeeper, custodian, nursery attendant, and worship (audio visual) technical assistants.

There are four buildings on the 4.3 acres of land. The sanctuary building seats 200 and has a narthex, choir room and restrooms. Voight Hall consists of a social hall which seats 120 for dinner/230 for presentations, a kitchen, restrooms, four offices, a nursery and two storage areas. The Marsh Christian Education Building has seven classrooms, restrooms and a CE supply room. The Youth Room is a portable classroom building that is presently being used by Serenity - an addiction group. There is a picnic area with tables and a barbeque, a field area, and a parking lot.

APPENDIX 4

CHURCH ACTIVITIES CROSSWALKED WITH CHURCH VALUES

(Refer to Page 7 for Definitions of Core Values)

June 2024

What we do	Belonging	Compassion	Fellowship	Helping	Spiritual Growth	Tradition
Worship	1				1	
Benevolence gift cards		1		1		
4th of July fireworks			1			
PW offerings		1		1		
Mission trip housing provided to others				1		
Community garden			1		1	
Missions Faire		1		1		
TGM		1		1		
Daily Bread (3rd Sunday)		1		1		
Short-term mission trips		1		1		1
Tutoring program				1		
AA Group hosting				1		
Eggstravaganza			1		1	1
Cocoa Party Christmas Tree Ln, parking & porta-potty			1	1		
Online stream (Covenant Living)	1				1	
PCUSA special offerings		1		1		
Prayer shawls	1	1		1		
Christmas gifts for kids	1	1		1		
Prayer ministry	1	1			1	
Voice choir	1		1		1	
Bell choir	1		1		1	

Deacon support	1	1		1		
Funeral luncheons	1	1		1		
Post-worship fellowship			1			
Bake Sale				1		1
Men's fellowship breakfast	1		1			
Cat support (Ruthie)						1
PW (Bible Study)	1		1		1	
Sunday school	1		1		1	1
Youth Group	1		1		1	1
2nd Friday Fellowship	1		1			
Mindfulness Group				1		
Share space w/ another congregation				1		
Congregational ride share				1		
Rental space				1		
Church work/cleanup days	1			1		
Youth Tech Team				1		
Shut-in Communion	1	1		1		
Over-80 lunch	1		1			
Church recycling				1		
Moms & Dads day gifts	1					1
Samaritans Purse Christmas boxes		1		1		
Food donations		1		1		
Greening the Sanctuary (Christmas decorations)						1
Totals:	18	15	13	26	10	8