

Dear Covenant Partners and Friends of First Pres,

We hope the new year finds you healthy and eager for what God has in store for our congregation. We write with several updates about transitions taking place within our church.

Senior Pastor Transition

Peter Barnes' retirement at the end of 2021 brings obvious changes to the day-to-day operation of our church. On January 9, we will vote to dissolve Peter's pastoral relationship with First Pres which impacts congregants' expectations for Peter and his interaction with us. The Personnel Committee will be sharing a letter shortly that highlights these details as set forth by our Presbytery.

The Transition Committee continues its good work to secure a transitional pastor. They have completed initial Zoom interviews and reference checks with three strong potential candidates. The Transition Committee is optimistic about all three and is working diligently to find the right transitional pastor for First Pres.

In the meantime, Session has asked Elders Debbie Hunter, Rick Wesley, and Mike Ford to serve as an "Operating Task Force." We are grateful that they have accepted the call to provide leadership, administrative and staff support from January 1 through the start of our transitional pastor. Business Manager Yvette Martin will serve as the temporary head of staff and chair the Senior Leadership Team until the transitional pastor begins. Associate Pastor Mike Horne will serve as Session Moderator through the start of the transitional pastor.

Open Positions

We continue our search for a full-time Director of Communications and a part-time Director of Children's Ministry. Position descriptions are available on the church website. The vacant position of Middle School Director will be reviewed after the Transitional Pastor is in place.

Congregation Conversations

We are grateful that so many covenant partners participated in the Congregational Conversations to consider together how we equip one another in discipleship and encounter God through worship. Members of the Encounter and Equip Task Force have typed all the observations captured during the conversations and through the online form and they have categorized all the comments. The observations from the Congregational Conversations will be one of a handful of important aspects of our discernment process as Session and staff listen to the Lord about how to move forward with discipleship, worship, and in particular, our worship schedule. A summary of the categorized observations will be available soon.

Equip One Another in Discipleship

The Discipleship Committee is excited to offer short-term Lent small groups once again. These groups are an excellent way to equip one another as we follow Jesus and provide more opportunities for relational connections. Groups will start around Ash Wednesday (March 2) and more information will be available in late January and early February.

The Discipleship Committee is also at work to discern the best way to shape and form new small groups. The Committee hopes to launch a new small group program in late summer or early fall of 2022. If you are interested in learning more about leading a group, please contact Amy Carlan, AmyC@1stpres.com.

Engage the World in Mission

In December, Session approved the Missional Living Committee's recommendation for distribution of \$100,000 from our 2020 surplus for one-time gifts to many of our mission partners. Additionally, Session voted to increase Mission support to 25% of our total expense budget over the next 5 years.

The Missional Living Committee is eager to share information and updates about some of our local and global mission partners in First this Week and through monthly Sunday morning announcements called "Stories from the Field". We want to specifically mention here our continued partnership with City with Dwellings. They are only using two churches as overflow shelters this winter due to COVID and need volunteers to help meet the needs of our homeless neighbors. Click here for more information or keep an eye on First this Week for City with Dwellings and other volunteer opportunities.

COVID-19 Protocols

We continue to follow the City of Winston-Salem's mask mandate that was implemented by the mayor in August. When the mayor lifts the city mandate, First Pres will resume its prior protocols, making masks optional for fully vaccinated individuals on the main floor of the worship venues and encouraging masks for unvaccinated individuals in accordance with CDC guidance. The balconies of both worship venues will be mask-required areas.

Congregational Meetings

We will hold a Congregational Meeting on January 9 after the worship service for the purpose of electing Elders and Deacons for the Class of 2025 and the Congregational Nominating Committee Class of 2022. We will also vote to officially dissolve the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Dr. Peter Barnes and First Presbyterian Church per his request.

We will hold the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on February 20 to report on the budget for 2021 and 2022, the ECO National Gathering, and other items of interest to the life of the congregation. This meeting will take place at 9:30 a.m. in the Worship Center.

Financial Update

We are so grateful for your continued financial support of our church and its ministries, and we anticipate finishing 2021 in a strong financial position. We do want to share, however, that to date, 2022 pledges are lower than previous years. The pledge total drives the overall budget of the church and the commitments we can make to our ministry areas. If you have not made a pledge for 2022, we ask that you prayerfully consider doing so this week. You can make your pledge here.

Finally, we ask for your continued prayer for our church – our covenant partners, our staff, our Session, the naming of a transitional pastor, the work of various task forces and committees, and our next senior pastor.

Yours in Christ,

The Session of First Presbyterian Church

Class of 2022	Class of 2023	Class of 2024
Leigh Askew	Rob Boone	Mike Ford
Brett Eaton	Lisa Dull	Margery Lewis
Eric Hoyle	Ellen Gibbs	Molly Lineberger
Debbie Hunter	David Satterwhite	Tim Lynde
Julie Lanford	Kathy Shields	Debby Pollock
Todd Rabold	Rick Wesley	Carter Sturkie