



**First Presbyterian Church of Springfield**

356 Summit Road, Springfield, PA 19064

**Mission Study**

**January 2023**

**Prepared by**

**Session of First Presbyterian Church of Springfield**

Cathy Agan

Jane Arimoto

Donna DeRose

Meg Mayo Lucas

David McNulty

Lisa Neff

Nanci Petroski

Debbie Rhodes

John Reed

**First Presbyterian Church of Springfield  
Mission Study**

**Table of Contents**

Introduction .....	2
Who We Are.....	2
Where We Are .....	3
Community Demographics .....	3
Church Demographics.....	3
Our Church Family - Conversation with the Congregation .....	4
What We Do and How We Do It .....	6
The Session .....	6
The Board of Deacons .....	6
Rabbit Hill Nursery School Board of Directors .....	7
Church Staff.....	7
Worship.....	7
Christian Education .....	8
Mission and Outreach.....	8
Challenges .....	8
Mission and Vision Planning .....	9

## Introduction

Our story began in 1924. The congregation that would become the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield (FPC) gathered in a fieldstone farmhouse on what is now Summit Road.

What was rolling farm land has long since become tracts of housing, built mostly after World War II. In the 1960s and 1970s the church and community were bulging with baby boomers.

Since the 1990s the church and community have both experienced population decline and stabilization. Springfield was once a destination for families moving out of the city. Now new homeowners are as likely to be families of children who grew up and stayed in, or returned, to the community.

The church building was built in sections as the congregation grew. The farmhouse was still in use until it was razed in 1959. Stones used in the original 1771 farmhouse were reused in the construction of current front entrance.

## Who We Are

Our brief mission statement is ... *to show and share Christ's love*. We endeavor to know and love Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and to make our lives an expression of our gratitude to God. We know Him through worship, study, prayer, and service. We share our love for Him by obeying His commandments to love one another, love our neighbors, and love "the least of these" both near and far away.

FPC's personality is identified as "family" by members surveyed in small groups and written surveys. The welcoming nature and outgoing spirit are attributes that have attracted new members. Long standing members feel that FPC is their family by love. Members describe FPC as traditional, friendly, open, loving, accepting, forgiving and growing in God's grace. Our members come from surrounding communities as well as Springfield. Members have moved out of the immediate area and continue to worship regularly at FPC.

We have had nine senior ministers since Rev. J. Earl Jackman was installed on July 2, 1926. Our current bridge pastor has been with us since November 2022, following our installed pastor's request for a leave of absence to address a personal crisis. Subsequently, our pastor informed us to say he would unfortunately not be returning due to personal reasons.

# Where We Are

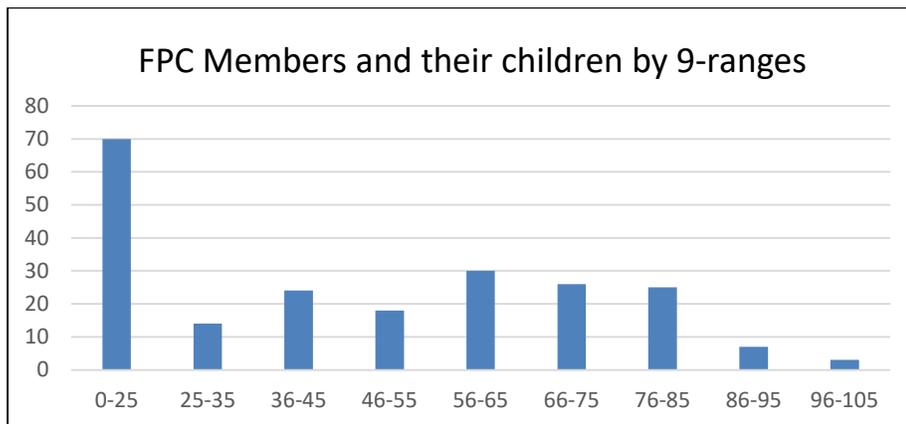
## Community Demographics

First Presbyterian Church (FPC), is located in Springfield, Delaware County, a residential suburb west of Philadelphia. Township government is an elected Board of Commissioners and appointed Township Manager. FPC is one of 14 Christian churches in town which make up a local Springfield Ministerium which provides community-wide outreach efforts. FPC is part of the historic Philadelphia Presbytery, celebrating 306 years in existence. We have shopping districts, a township owned and operated golf course/ice rink/swimming pool complex, a private swim club, 24 public parks, hotels, restaurants and several historical structures dating to the 1700s. For our youth, two very active athletic associations provide teams for numerous sports, both on the intramural and advanced levels. The Springfield School District consists of five nationally recognized schools ranking in the top 7% of the state.

The Springfield community demographic is middle class, predominately made up of Roman Catholic families of Irish and Italian decent. The 2020 population was approximately 25,070, with a breakdown of 90% Caucasian, 3% Black or African American, 5% Asian and 2% Hispanic or other races. We have predominately single family houses, with 64% being owner occupied. We are a highly educated community. More than 96% graduated high school, and 49% have a higher education level. The median household income is \$123,280 (2021 estimate).

## Church Demographics

Our congregation demographics reflects the demographics and education level of Springfield community. FPC membership at the end of 2022 was 175. Including the children of members, this number is 217, and is 96 percent Caucasian, 3 percent Asian, less than 1 percent Black or African American. Our congregation has multiple generations including more than 40 children and youth. Age distribution is relatively even with 31 percent under age 24, 44 percent ages 35 to 64, and 24 percent age 65 and older. With 72 percent of our church community younger than 65, we see ourselves as a younger congregation. We have almost twice as many female members as male members, with 60 males and 115 females. Compared to other churches of our size, a higher percentage of church members attend regularly.



# **Our Church Family - Conversation with the Congregation**

During our last congregation-wide conversation about the nature of our church, we sought to better understand who we are as a family and what we feel and think about our church. The responses are as follows:

## **1. What brought you to First Presbyterian Church (FPC)?**

Some members grew up in the community, others found FPC through friends, neighbors and relatives. Many came after hearing about our pastors. Our church sponsored nursery school, Rabbit Hill, has often been a source of new members. A common thread that has brought new members to FPC is the warm and welcoming church family.

## **2. What keeps you at FPC?**

Simply stated, the people. Our congregation is warm and friendly; always greeting and welcoming guests and new worshipers. FPC is a family oriented church that is loving and caring; a place where even friends feel like family. A place where single members feel welcome and included. Many members have roots here, watching their families grow, marry, and begin their own families.

Like most families, we stick together through thick and thin. While there is often diversity of opinion, our strong bond promotes acceptance of different views and allows us to function together, focusing on what we have in common, and what unites us.

FPC offers numerous and wide-ranging opportunities to serve; allowing everyone an opportunity to do the Lord's work within the church, the community and elsewhere.

## **3. What is the most important part of our church?**

Again, the resounding answer was "the people". Our willingness to work together, accept and tolerate political and other differences, and focus on our priorities, is a special and unique quality among us.

## **4. How would you describe our church?**

Our church is a multi-generational extension of family and friends who love the Lord. People feel connected and rooted, celebrating actively in groups, committees, commissions, and other church events.

Members describe us as warm, friendly and positive. FPC is a great place to raise a family, in an accepting and nurturing environment. We are open to, and embrace a wide range of ideas and beliefs; not embedded in either conservative or liberal mindsets. We are God-centered, Bible-based and scripture-teaching. We have a strong focus on Christian education, with offerings for all ages, preschool to adult.

**5. Why do you love this church?**

The atmosphere and spirit of the people is infectious. We believe that God's love works through us in worship and fellowship. We are genuine and speak from our hearts. Our members appreciate the connection and outreach with senior members, and the strong foundation provided for our children and youth. Our church is also a place where people can be comfortable, accepting of informal dress and overall, conveying a sense of peace.

**6. What are your favorite things that happen at FPC?**

We love the feeling of "family"; that while we may not always agree, we are accepting and understanding. Beyond our Sunday worship service, favorite activities are anything we can do together as a church family, which includes:

- Activities and events: Deacons' dinners, picnics, church theater, game nights.
- Children and youth activities: Sunday evening fellowship, mission trips, retreats, participation in the worship service.
- Music program: Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir, Children's and special choirs, and special music events.
- Traditions: Advent Deacons' dinner, Christmas Eve services, Easter worship, Fellowship Easter Egg Hunt and Easter breakfast, singing the Hallelujah Chorus together, and Vacation Bible School.

**7. What would you like the PNC to know?**

We love the Lord; our faith is our priority. We are Bible-based, Biblically founded; emphasizing Bible study and Christian education. We value old traditions and creating new ones, and our multi-generational congregation – the wide range of young and old.

Individually and as a congregation, we are aware that we are on a lifetime faith journey. We want our pastor to guide, lead, and encourage us on paths of spiritual growth through positive illumination and inspiration.

**We are looking for a Pastor who:**

- Will view their role as Pastor as a relationship, not a job.
- Welcomes and supports our diversity.
- Provides effective Pastoral leadership.
- Supports and builds growth in our church and youth programs.
- Presents thought-provoking sermons.
- Encourages learning, understanding and knowledge in our faith journey.

# What We Do and How We Do It

## The Session

The church programs and property are governed by a nine-member **Session** under a unicameral system. The Session is comprised of nine Ruling Elders and a Teaching Elder. Elders also serve as chairpersons of four Commissions which were established in 2016, and are still under development. One Session member is also currently serving as the Clerk of Session. Many of the functions of the church are carried out by individual committees which report to the Session through the four Commissions.

The Commissions are as follows:

The **Spiritual Life Commission** oversees all ministries that relate to growing in our relationship with God through worship and education. It is comprised of committees and task groups which coordinate music ministry, stewardship resources, worship resources, liturgists, offering counters, sacraments, ushers, and all ministries of Christian Education.

The **Fellowship and Congregational Care Commission** oversees all fellowship ministries related to congregational care. It is comprised of committees and task groups which coordinate receptions, senior care ministry, congregational communications, greeters, food cupboard, care meals, fellowship meals, and all general fellowship activities.

The **Resource Commission** oversees the stewardship of the resources that support the ministries of the church. It is comprised of committees and task groups which coordinate staffing, property maintenance, facility usage, financial budgets and reports, memorials and scholarship funds.

The **Outreach Commission** oversees outreach efforts, publicity, and mission opportunities within the church including mission collections and distributions, community relations, and Presbytery relations. It is comprised of committees and task groups which coordinate benevolence funds, mission collections, local outreach, PCUSA support, Rabbit Hill Nursery School Board, and general publicity-related items.

## The Board of Deacons

The **Board of Deacons** is comprised of eleven members who faithfully serve the needs within our congregation for three-year terms. Their motto is "I am YOUR Deacon". They respond to the joys and concerns of our members with love and care. They deliver flowers and care meals, send letters of concern, visit our eldest members, disburse benevolence gifts, and pray. They celebrate joyful times with birthday cards to the children, baskets of goodies for newborn babies, delivery of Easter and Christmas flowers to shut-ins, and cards to every member. They also organize Deacons Dinners, fellowship game nights, Doughnuts with Deacons, Hanging of the Greens, and transportation for seniors. They reach out to needy families through our food cupboard and emergency financial assistance.

## **Rabbit Hill Nursery School Board of Directors**

The church operates a non-denominational Christian preschool, Rabbit Hill Nursery School, which has been recognized within the community for 75 years. In 1975 the school relocated to FPC, from another location, and has been serving as an outreach to introduce parents to the church. Some families have joined the church because of their experience with the preschool and FPC's outreach events such as the annual Easter Egg Hunt. For many, this may be their only experience with a Christian organization. Oversight of the school's affairs and staff is commissioned to the Board of Directors which is comprised of church members and reports directly to the Session. The school's finances and payroll are maintained by a separate treasurer under the guidance of the Board of Directors.

## **Church Staff**

Our current staff includes a Bridge Pastor (salaried) and four part-time staff members – an Office Manager (salaried, 25 hours), a Sexton (hourly, 25-30 hours), a Family Ministries Coordinator (salaried, 25 hours), and a Director of Music Ministries (salaried, 20 hours).

Our **Office Manager** plays a vital role in greeting those who call or visit the church. She prepares all written and electronic church communications, coordinates weekly volunteers, and provides administrative support for the pastor.

Our **Sexton** performs all cleaning and maintenance tasks for the church building and property, with particular emphasis on daily cleaning of our nursery school. He also assists with funerals and other special events and maintains our memorial garden.

Our **Family Ministries Coordinator** leads our youngest members and their families in a comprehensive ministry of education, fellowship and service. She spearheads efforts that welcome prospective members such as Vacation Bible School and "PJs and a Movie" Nights. She trains our teachers and leaders and takes groups on a week-long mission trips and periodic day trips.

Our **Director of Music Ministry** plays organ and piano for our Sunday worship services. She conducts our Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir, and Children's Choir and recruits individual musicians to share their gifts in worship. She coordinates and composes special music during Advent and Lent, and leads us in continuing musical traditions such as singing the Hallelujah Chorus.

## **Worship**

Each Sunday we worship the Lord in music and hear inspired preaching of the Word, which motivates us in our church and personal life. Members can also join us on-line with live streaming. We have a traditional service and music, often blended with an occasional mix of contemporary music. Our youth participate monthly as they serve as ushers and liturgists. Our Children's Choir occasionally sings in worship. We celebrate communion on the first Sunday of most months, alternating the method between intinction and serving in the pews, and bring communion to homebound members of the congregation. We join with community churches for combined services for Thanksgiving, Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday.

## **Christian Education**

There are many opportunities and activities for spiritual growth. Our congregation offers monthly circle meetings for women of the church and a Sunday morning adult class which is well supported by a core group of spirited members with interest in continued learning and sharing the Word of our Lord. We have many youth activities including an active youth group which performs service projects and annual mission trips. Children attend a popular Worship Our Way (WOW) program which is offered for young children during the worship service.

## **Mission and Outreach**

Our mission and outreach efforts begin with our church facility, which we offer to various community groups for weekly use. Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, a community chorus and scout troops consider our church building their home. We reach out to our local community through food drives, collections of school supplies and Christmas gifts for local schools. In the greater Philadelphia area, we serve meals to Life Center shelter several times a year. We also assist City Team Ministries by distributing holiday meals and toys to those in need in our county.

Our Youth Ministry engages in significant mission and outreach efforts throughout the year. They lead our church's effort in the annual Souper Bowl of Caring food drive, prepare meals for homeless individuals through a ministry called Connect-By-Night, and visit senior members of the congregation. They have visited local nursing homes and performed Random Acts of Kindness throughout our community and at our local mall. Each summer they head out on a week-long mission trip. Prior to the pandemic, our last mission trip included 13 youth and 4 adults who spent a week in Connecticut serving local missions in the area.

Many of our members contribute financially, over and above their pledges, through our "Mission of the Month" selected by our Outreach Commission.

Internationally, we have supported short term missions to Haiti and Belarus, and support a daughter of the church and her husband who serve as missionaries in the Czech Republic. We collect clothes and supplies for Children of Chernobyl, Boy Scouts, Haiti, and Honduras, and contribute to emergency offerings through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

## **Challenges**

Connecting with newer members can be a challenge. We are working on developing a process to integrate new members into the life of the church after joining.

Decades ago, an associate pastor sexually abused minor members of the church. Later, an elder, was convicted of sexual abuse of a family member. We worked through those challenges and face the future with a strong sense of purpose and increased protection of our children and members. New child protection policies and volunteer training were put in place to assure the safety of our children and members.

During the pandemic, when faced with the unprecedented challenge of not being able to meet in person, our church rose to the challenge and developed a staged reopening process that provided a model to other churches within the presbytery. We implemented new technologies and approaches within worship that have since become permanent. Like most churches re-emerging from the pandemic, we are struggling with gathering as many

people as one time—even while our online participation has grown and access to our online worship is still utilized.

Most recently, as a congregation, we shared the grief and mourning of our pastor's personal loss and worked with him and his spouse to ensure the best care for him. Having experienced an unexpected transition during the re-emergence of church following the pandemic has been difficult. We are a congregation with great energy and an ability to maintain our current programs, but waiting for some further leadership.

While older members of the congregation have historically been the most generous in their financial giving, we now have fewer of them. Many have died or moved away, and younger members have not been able to match the level of giving of their elders. Many of the deceased have generously bequeathed memorial gifts to the church in their wills. These gifts have helped maintain our Memorial Garden, renovate our Lounge, and increase our Legacy Fund (endowment).

Our pledged income and number of pledges has decreased each year over the past decade, however our members give generously to special offerings and our Mission of the Month. Currently our contributions do not cover our annual expenses, which is a growing concern, but we remain debt-free. Incomes from the multiple cell phone towers in our church steeple, along with loans from our savings accounts and mutual funds have allowed us to cover budget shortfalls in recent years.

## **Mission and Vision Planning**

As a 200-plus member Christian community, we relate to one another like a family. As families change, we know that our church family will need to change as it grows.

We hope to expand the size of our family by welcoming new members to join us. Special outreach events such as Vacation Bible School, and the Easter Egg Hunt are potential entry points for prospective members. Our nursery school, Rabbit Hill, continues to be an open door to our church and community.

We consider our facilities under-utilized and hope to increase the usage by offering it as a home for more community groups, social events and possibly a counseling office.

We hope to continue collaborating with area churches in mission projects, youth outreach and worship, as we have increasingly done in recent years.

We hope to offer additional opportunities for spiritual growth and Christian education for people of all ages in our congregation and community. We hope to add programs such as mid-week Bible studies, and prayer meetings.

We expect our worship to be energized by active lay leadership as liturgists and musicians.

We hope to expand our outreach efforts locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

We hope to continue to be an accepting and welcoming community that encourages understanding one another, and provides opportunities for building relationships and hearing different viewpoints.

We will plan new and innovative initiatives to attract younger, unchurched members to our congregation.