First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville

Vision Plan 2026

Our Vision and What Happens Next

Where This Came From

Every five years, our congregation asks one question together: Who is God calling First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville to be at this time?

Over the course of 2026, we asked you. You gathered around tables in three congregation-wide conversations. You told stories about what brought you here. You named what you love and what worries you. You dreamed out loud about our future. Hundreds of your comments shaped this plan.

We also studied our neighbors within about 20 miles of the church. Three findings mattered most.

- Most people around us remain open to learning about God and Jesus.
- Fewer than half take part in any religious community. Spiritual curiosity runs well ahead of church attendance.
- When people describe what they want from a church, they name real relationships, meaningful worship, personal connection, and chances to make a difference. Programs and buildings rank lower.

Here is the encouraging part. What our neighbors long for is what this congregation already does well.

Everything that follows is rooted in the mission statement Session approved in April 2024:

> *"We joyfully embrace the transformative love of Christ, fostering connections that transcend barriers. We are a community of hope and discipleship that strives to celebrate and empower every person to flourish in the light of God's love."*

What You Told Us

What you love: Worship and music came first, again and again. You also named children's ministry, pastoral leadership, Christian education, our Matthew 25 commitments, social justice ministries, and the care you show one another. Many of you came for the music or the preaching. You stayed because this church became your family.

What concerns you: You were honest. Participation trends here mirror what churches face nationwide. Staff and volunteers carry a heavy load. You want more attention and resources for children, youth, and families. You want better use of our buildings. In a congregation this size, you want to feel more deeply known.

What you dream about: A church that connects the generations, grows with energy, forms faith across a lifetime, reaches well beyond our walls, hums with activity throughout the week, and rests on strong relationships.

The Vision in Three Parts

Three themes surfaced in every conversation. Two values run through all of them: relationships and celebration.

1. Christ-Centered Worship

The vision: Worship will form people over a lifetime to love God and their neighbor.

What changes

- More children, youth, and adults lead in worship as readers, musicians, ushers, greeters, and liturgical leaders.
- Expanded online worship for homebound members, travelers, and anyone exploring faith.
- Worship series tied to Bible study, service, and spiritual practice during the week.
- Continued excellence in music, preaching, liturgy, and sacraments.

2. Lifelong Spiritual Formation

The vision: To be a community of lifelong discipleship where every person is invited to grow deeper in faith at every stage of life.

What changes

- A clear pathway for growth at every age, so you know where to start and where to go next.
- Stronger Christian education through Bible study, prayer, retreats, and spiritual practices.
- Real investment in ministry with families, children, and youth.
- Mentoring across generations, so every child and youth knows caring adults beyond their own family.
- Room for questions and doubt as part of the journey.

3. Community and Shared Experiences

The vision: To be a vibrant hub of Christian community where relationships flourish, people find belonging, and Christ's love is experienced beyond our walls.

What changes

- Clear pathways that help first-time visitors move from the pew into the life of the church.
- Our campus is used throughout the week by church and community groups, including a study of what hosting a preschool would take.
- Partnerships with schools, nonprofits, community organizations, and neighboring congregations.
- Continued growth in our Matthew 25 ministries.
- Every member serving in at least one ministry each year that reaches the broader community.

What Happens Next

Many of you said the same thing about past planning efforts: you want a living guide, not a binder on a shelf. Fair. Here is the plan for keeping this one in front of you.

Step 1. Three Implementation Teams form

Session will charge three Vision Implementation Teams, one for each priority above. Each team includes members from across the congregation, drawn from different ages, backgrounds, and ministry areas. These teams do not replace existing committees. Their job is to turn the vision into practical steps.

Service on a team runs one year, with the option to renew. The Nominating Committee handles recruiting. Our goal is to have all three teams in place in October.

Step 2. Progress moves up a clear reporting line

Each Implementation Team reports to Long Range Planning every three months. LRP carries that progress to Session at least every six months. Session holds responsibility for the direction of the church and decides how the work moves forward.

LRP also keeps the plan in front of Deacons, staff, and the congregation, so you hear how the work is going.

Step 3. We review, adjust, and celebrate on a regular rhythm

When	What happens
Every 3 months	Each Implementation Team reports to LRP on one page: goals, progress, obstacles, help needed, and wins. One win is celebrated in worship and in Parish Life.
At least every 6 months	LRP brings the progress to Session. Session reviews every active goal and decides to continue it, revise it, or retire it. Goals no longer serving the vision come off the list.
Every year	A church-wide celebration with a shared meal. We report the full year back to you plainly. Here was the plan. Here is what happened. Progress markers in the building are updated.

What the first year should produce

- Three Implementation Teams formed and at work.
- Four quarterly reports to LRP and two reviews with Session completed.
- Our first church-wide Vision Plan celebration held.

By year three, our goal is simple. Ask any member what the Vision Plan has accomplished, and they can name at least one win.

How You Can Be Part of It

This vision will not be built by a committee, a staffing plan, or a budget line. It grows through the ordinary faithfulness of people who show up for one another.

Serve on an Implementation Team

- Three teams, one for each priority: Christ-Centered Worship, Lifelong Spiritual Formation, and Community and Shared Experiences.
- One-year term, with the option to renew.
- Members from every age, background, and ministry area are needed.
- Teams form in October. The Nominating Committee is recruiting now.
- Interested? Reach out to Gary Holland, head of the Nominating Committee, at 847.846.2709 or grh726@aol.com.

Four other ways to start this year

- Serve in worship. Read, sing, usher, greet, or help lead. Every generation belongs up front.
- Join one group. A Bible study, a small group, a class, or a retreat.
- Get to know someone outside your generation. Mentoring begins with a conversation.
- Say yes to one ministry that serves beyond our walls.

Bring your questions to Session members, staff, and Vision Team members. Tell us what you see working and what needs to change. This plan belongs to the whole congregation, and it stays alive only if you keep speaking into it.

The Journey Ahead

Through months of listening, a clear picture emerged. Not a different church, but a church becoming more fully who God has already called it to be.

- A congregation shaped by Christ-centered worship.
- A community committed to lifelong spiritual formation.
- A church where relationships, belonging, and shared experiences reflect the love of Christ.
- A Matthew 25 congregation that serves, advocates, and partners for the good of the wider community.
- A place where people of every generation can flourish in faith.

With gratitude for those who came before us, confidence in God's presence among us, and hope for the future before us, we step into the next chapter of the First Pres story together.

We do not know all that the future holds. But we trust the One who calls us forward.