

Dear Friends,

Two weeks ago I shared with you the “marks of a blessed church” as defined by the Rev. Graham Standish: *The blessed church sees itself as the body of Christ. The blessed church has a vibrant sense of faith, hope, and love. The blessed church is a church filled with God’s purpose, presence, and power. The blessed church embraces the sacred. The blessed church is not afraid to serve God in its own way.*

Assuming that these are desirable characteristics for any church, what is our particular vision for the First Presbyterian Church of Salem, Ohio? Let me share some thoughts I had while I was at the LOGOS Conference. (This is not a complete description of all that we can be and do!)

My vision is that First Presbyterian Church of Salem be a church where we . . .

- rejoice in the call we have heard to be disciples of Jesus Christ.
- worship joyfully, holding fast our Reformed heritage while being open to new ways of building up the Body of Christ.
- understand ourselves as a “household of faith,” where people make their needs known to one another and serve one another with prayer and concern.
- discuss issues in our life together openly and honestly. Though we may sometimes disagree, we always recognize one another as children of God.
- let God open the eyes of our hearts so that we *expect* to see God at work in us and around us.
- willingly share our experiences of God’s love with one another and with neighbors.
- rejoice in being a multi-generational church family that take the needs of all its members seriously.
- genuinely welcome people of all social classes, ethnic origins, life experience, or political persuasion.
- stand under the Word of God – with opportunities for every person to study, discuss, and experience God’s Word
- continue to expand and explore mission, finding new ways to reach out to our church’s neighborhood as well as to people everywhere with the love God has shown us in Jesus Christ.
- recognize music and all the arts as gifts of our Creator.
- encourage the gifts of all our people in loving God and neighbors.
- generously share our time, talents and resources to the glory of God.
- provide a “safe place” to discuss issues of the day on which we may have strong and differing opinions, understanding that all of us are seeking the will and justice of God, and hoping to further the Kingdom of God on earth.
- are always asking “What is God calling us to be and do in this time and place?” and make decisions about programs and projects accordingly.
- intentionally evaluate what we’re doing, and be willing to make “mid-course corrections”.
- are neither chained to the past nor fearful of the future.
- are constantly giving thanks for all that God has done for us!

Blessings,
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