

## Addendum 1 – Theological Vision for First Pres Aurora

### A Note from Session

*The following document reflects the theological vision that Session has been prayerfully discerning for First Pres Aurora through an extended season of reflection — capturing the convictions and emphases we believe should guide the ministry of our next Pastor, Session, and church leadership.*

*Like many congregations, our members have been shaped by a variety of church traditions and ministry experiences. As such, this document is not meant to suggest that every member or ministry currently reflects these convictions with equal clarity or consistency. Rather, we are seeking to articulate a theological vision that we believe should increasingly characterize the life and ministry of our church.*

*We seek a Pastor who will joyfully embrace this vision, and patiently help our Session, leaders, and congregation grow into greater consistency with it through the faithful ministry of the Word, prayer, discipleship, and shepherding.*

*Session of First Presbyterian Church of Aurora  
Spring 2026*

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## Theological Vision for First Pres Aurora — Work in Progress

### Biblical Purpose Statement (Why do we exist as a church?)

We exist to glorify God and bear witness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ — to be a church of disciples and disciple makers who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are joyful and faithful in worship, fellowship, and mission for the advance of the gospel and the good of our community.

### Our Mission

First Pres is a church founded on the Word of God. As a family of disciples centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ, we exist to make disciples of all ages, abilities, and ethnicities, for the glory of God and the advance of his kingdom.

## Our Values

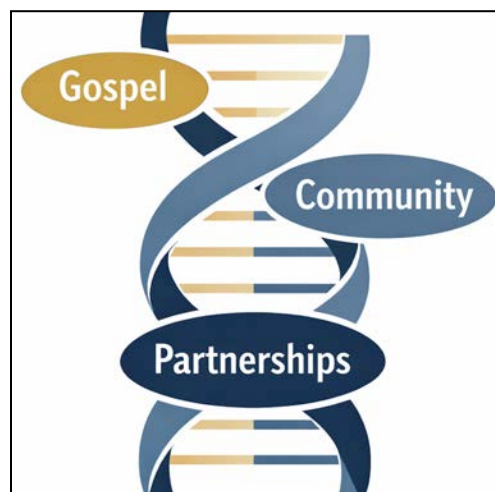
|                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Centered on the Gospel</b>                                   | We hold fast to the gospel as of first importance—the good news that God saves and transforms sinners through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and is making all things new under his lordship. |
| <b>Rooted in the Word &amp; Prayer</b>                          | God is living, and he has spoken through his Word. Through Scripture and prayer, the Holy Spirit guides our worship, forms our faith, and sustains our life together.                                             |
| <b>Welcoming all in Christ</b>                                  | We seek to be a church where people of all ages, abilities, and ethnicities are welcomed to worship, belong, and grow in Christ.                                                                                  |
| <b>Making disciples of Jesus Christ</b>                         | We are called not only to proclaim the gospel, but to make disciples—helping people follow Jesus with their whole lives.                                                                                          |
| <b>Bearing witness to the Lordship of Christ in all of life</b> | We confess that Jesus is Lord in every area of life. By word and deed, we seek to bear witness to the reality of Christ in our homes, vocations, community, and public life.                                      |

## Our DNA

### *Gospel > Community > Partnerships*

**Gospel:** We are centered on the good news that God, in his mercy, has acted in Jesus Christ to reconcile sinners to himself and is restoring all things under his lordship. The gospel stands at the center of all our ministry—our sure hope, power for the Christian life, and the message we are most eager to share with the world.

**Community:** God forms his people in community, where we are known, loved, challenged, and shaped through worship, mutual care, and service. As a church family, we receive and grow in grace together through all of God's appointed means, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer.



**Partnership:** We are delighted to join in God's global mission through strategic partnerships, both within our church and with other churches, ministries, and organizations, for the advance of Christ's kingdom locally and globally.

## Philosophy of Ministry

A "*philosophy of ministry*" describes how our theological convictions and core values shape the way we worship, lead, disciple, and serve in our local context. It does not replace our doctrinal standards or governing documents but serves as a bridge between what we believe and how we minister.

The following are key components of our ministry philosophy at First Pres, how we're striving to live out our calling as a church.

### **1. The Centrality of the Gospel in all Church Ministry**

#### **The Gospel of Jesus Christ**

The gospel is the good news that God has acted decisively in Jesus Christ to save sinners and to reconcile all things to himself. In his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ has accomplished redemption and now intercedes and reigns (1 Cor. 15:1–11; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20–22). By grace alone, through faith alone, sinners are justified, adopted, and united to Christ.

The gospel is not moral instruction, religious advice, or the work we do as Christians; it is the announcement of what God has done and through Jesus. It calls us to repentance and faith and anchors our identity in the finished work of Christ.

In his mercy, God is not only redeeming a people for his own possession—his church—but is also bringing about the renewal of all things under the lordship of Christ (1 Pet. 2:9–10; Eph. 1:9–10; Col. 1:19–20).

#### **The Centrality of the Gospel in All Ministry**

The gospel isn't just for the start of the Christian life—it shapes the entire ministry of the church. Our preaching proclaims Christ crucified and risen. Our worship responds to grace received. Our discipleship flows from our identity in Christ before our activity for Christ, while our leaders serve with humility shaped by the cross. Likewise, our mercy ministries and mission are expressions of gratitude and joy, not attempts to earn God's favor. We seek to avoid both legalism and moralism by continually returning to the good news of Jesus Christ. Every ministry of First Pres should ultimately proclaim, display, and apply the gospel.

## **The Gospel Shapes all of Life**

The gospel fundamentally changes our standing before God and our daily living under Christ's lordship. Because we are justified by grace, we are freed in Christ to obey without fear and to serve with sincere love. The lordship of Christ and the gospel of his grace ought to have a transforming effect in our families, jobs, relationships, citizenship, and cultural engagement — shaping who we are in private and who we are in public.

We resist compartmentalizing our faith. Instead, we seek to live (and to help each other live) as faithful, redeemed disciples. When the gospel is faithfully applied, by God's grace, it fuels humility, repentance, courage, generosity, perseverance and all fruit of the Spirit. It forms a people marked by both truth and grace, a faithful community bearing witness to the reality of Christ in all of life.

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## **2. The Mission of the Church**

The church exists to glorify God and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

We gather to worship the triune God and to be formed by his grace. We are sent out to bear witness to Christ in our homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and city. Our mission includes proclaiming the gospel, nurturing believers toward maturity, and demonstrating Christ's compassion through mercy and justice.

We are not interested in institutional preservation or cultural relevance for its own sake. Our calling is faithfulness — to preach Christ, shepherd his people, and participate in his redemptive work in the world. As we have summarized our biblical purpose,

*"We exist to glorify God and bear witness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ — to be a church of disciples and disciple makers who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are faithful in worship, fellowship, and mission for the advance of the gospel and the good of our community."*

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## **3. Embracing Our Tradition**

As an Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) congregation, we embrace confessional Presbyterianism as a biblically faithful expression of Christian doctrine, church government, and worship.

## What is Presbyterianism?

- As a system of doctrine — We embrace a distinctly Reformed theology that emphasizes God's sovereign rule over all things and his gracious work of redemption through Jesus Christ.
- As a system of church government — We believe Christ rules his church through his Word and Spirit, ordinarily shepherding his people through a plurality of ordained elders who share responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the congregation.
- As a pattern of worship — God's Word shapes how God is to be worshiped, and therefore we emphasize the ordinary means of grace. We believe that Christ ordinarily communicates the benefits of redemption to his people through "all his ordinances; especially the Word, the sacraments, and prayer."<sup>1</sup> Through these means, the Holy Spirit forms, nourishes, and sustains the church.

## Foundational Commitments

- **Creedal** — We affirm the ancient ecumenical creeds (especially the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds) which summarize essential truths of the Christian faith, particularly our Trinitarian and Christological convictions, and unite us with the historic, global church.
- **Confessional** — We affirm the Reformed confessions, especially the Westminster Standards (the Confession of Faith and the Larger & Shorter Catechisms), as faithful summaries of biblical teaching. These standards are subordinate to Scripture, yet they unify and guide our doctrine, worship, and governance. For church officers, these standards provide a common theological framework for ordination, teaching, governance, and faithful ministry under Christ.
- **Covenantal** — We understand our life together as covenantal. God relates to his people through covenant, and the visible church reflects that reality through baptism, membership, vows, and mutual responsibility. Our faith is corporate and intergenerational, calling us to shared accountability, sacramental faithfulness, and persevering love within the body of Christ.
- **Connectional** — We understand the church to be connectional. While our congregation is governed locally by its Session, we are also part of a wider family of churches through Rivers & Lakes Presbytery and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, joined together by shared doctrine, mutual accountability, and common mission. At the same time, we gladly partner with other gospel-preaching churches

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<sup>1</sup> WLC 154; cf. WCF 14, 21, 27

throughout the Aurora area, recognizing that Christ is building one Church and that faithful congregations can labor together for the good of our community.

These commitments provide the theological foundation and practical framework for our ministry. They give clarity, foster unity, and provide stability as we seek to follow Christ together. Everything that follows in our philosophy of ministry flows from and is governed by these commitments.

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#### **4. Corporate Worship**

In our corporate worship, we engage in a holy dialogue with the living God: we bow in worship, lift our voices in praise, hear his Word proclaimed at the heart of our weekly gathering, and respond in faith and obedience. In keeping with our Reformed tradition, our worship is ordered around the ordinary means of grace — the ministry of the Word, the sacraments, and prayer.

We are committed to expositional preaching, seeking to proclaim the whole counsel of God by faithfully explaining and applying Scripture. In the faithful preaching of God's Word, Christ himself addresses his people, calling them to faith, repentance, and obedience. While expositional preaching is our ordinary practice, we may at times address particular topics; in every case, such preaching must remain governed by and faithful to Scripture. Through this ministry of the Word, the Holy Spirit forms, convicts, comforts, and strengthens his people.

We typically follow a fourfold order of worship in our Sunday service: being called to worship, hearing the Word, responding (whether through communion, prayer, or reflection), and being sent. This gospel-shaped pattern forms and sends us week by week.

Within this structure, our posture is one of convergent worship, as we draw from the riches of historic Christian worship while incorporating faithful contemporary and multi-cultural expressions. This approach serves multiple generations and backgrounds without privileging one at the expense of another. Our emphasis is not on style, but on supporting the purpose of the gospel-shaped order of worship and its formative work in the life of the congregation.

We avoid entertainment-driven or performance-centered approaches. At the same time, we cultivate grace-motivated excellence and thoughtful creativity within our confessional commitments, seeking worship that is rooted, authentic, accessible, and marked by appropriate affections for God.

As we serve people from many backgrounds and traditions, we work to avoid unnecessary barriers (whether cultural or matters of conscience), striving for reverent, participatory worship that fosters unity in Christ.

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## 5. Discipleship and Spiritual Formation

At First Pres, we believe the Christian life grows when it is connected to the *gospel*, is lived out in *community*, and is expressed through *partnership* in Christ's mission. Within that shared life, the Holy Spirit forms us as disciples, helping us heed God's Word, worship him together, and go out into the world to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, our approach to discipleship and spiritual formation emphasizes three dimensions—**Word, Worship, and Witness**—engaging mind, heart, and life together in following and imitating Christ.

| Discipleship Dimension           | What It Forms                          | Expressions                                                                                                                                               | Sample Verses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A Life Rooted in the WORD</b> | Belief: Lives shaped by God's truth    | Scripture reading, biblical teaching, theology, spiritual wisdom, Christian worldview                                                                     | <p><i>"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."</i> (Romans 12:2)</p> <p><i>"Blessed is the man... who delights in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."</i> (Psalm 1:1–2)</p>                                      |
| <b>A Life Formed in WORSHIP</b>  | Encounter: Lives shaped by love of God | corporate worship, prayer, repentance and humility, healing and restoration, holiness and obedience, spiritual disciplines, the arts, beauty, imagination | <p><i>"I appeal to you therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."</i> (Romans 12:1)</p> <p><i>"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."</i> (John 4:23)</p> |
| <b>A Life Sent in WITNESS</b>    | Praxis: Lives shaped for               | evangelism and disciple- making, mercy and justice,                                                                                                       | <i>"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."</i> (Matthew 28:18–20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

|  |                  |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Christ's mission | hospitality and service, vocation, cultural engagement, good works of many kinds | <p><i>"... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)</i></p> <p><i>"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)</i></p> |
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*The following sections are still being developed and are not included in this draft:*

## **6. Community & Congregational Care**

## **7. Partnerships and Mission**

## **8. Leadership**