

Mission Study

First Presbyterian Church

Whitefish, Montana

December 2010



www.fpcwhitefish.org

CELEBRATING OUR HISTORY

In July 1903, Rev. Pringle & Rev Ellis bicycled, hiked and boated from Kalispell to investigate the possibility of establishing Christian work at the small lakeside settlement of Ramsey (later named Whitefish). In August, The first Sunday school met under a tree overlooking Whitefish Lake. During the next few weeks, Rev. Pringle asked settlement residents and Kalispell merchants for donations and labor for a new church.

The town donated a site for the new church on the corner of what is now Woodland and Montana Streets. By December, the new church was erected and by December 6, 1903, the new church was organized with 16 members and Rev. William Hoole was called as first Pastor. He built a two story parsonage in back of the church. The church was used as a public school during the week and as a Presbyterian and Methodist house of worship on Sundays.

As the town grew and expanded south of the railroad tracks, the congregation bought a boarding house and built another church. There were two churches, with the morning service being held at the Lakeview Church and the evening service at the Southside Church.

After several moves, buildings, locations, and pastors, the cornerstone was laid for the current building on May 10, 1921. The superstructure of the church went up rapidly and the building was dedicated on a Sunday in October 1921.

In 1984, a 3,000 sq.ft. addition was dedicated, providing a beautiful fellowship hall, office space and handicap (elevator) access. The basement was renovated in 1986, providing new classrooms and a chapel. Through dedicated maintenance and Building Legacy funding, our Church promises to remain a beautiful, well-kept sanctuary at the corner of Central Avenue and Third Street in downtown Whitefish, Montana. The historically significant stained glass windows are especially enjoyed by the congregation and visitors alike.

The First Presbyterian Church of Whitefish, Montana celebrated its 100th birthday in 2003 and was accepted into the Montana Historical Society and was put on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Today the church is a cornerstone to a vibrant and active downtown commercial and residential area. We are the home to group meetings, community outreach, and people in need. To learn more visit www.fpcwhitefish.org.

CELEBRATING OUR PLACE

There is only one Whitefish. Our town is surrounded by mountains, lakes and streams with endless outdoor recreational activities that expand and contract the community depending on the season. If you ask the visitors, there are officially two seasons in Whitefish, ski and golf; but if you ask the locals, there are many reasons we call it home.

Whitefish is built on the personalities, generosity, and wisdom of its residents. The same spirit that motivated the men and women in 1921 to fashion our church building of brick and stone that will outlast the generations is alive and well in our community. When the community is asked to “Step-Up”; the people respond. Through private donations, facilities have been built that support education, the arts, health and welfare, and youth activities.

Community Highlights

- Nestled among mountains in beautiful Flathead Valley
- 30 minutes from Glacier National Park
- Year round sports and recreational opportunities:
 - Downhill and cross-country skiing
 - Hunting and Fishing
 - Boating
 - Camping
 - The WAVE (Recreational & Aquatic Center)
 - Golf (WLGC features two, public 18-hole courses)
 - Ice Den indoor skating rink
- Excellent public and private schools and a near-by Community College
- Cultural and Civic opportunities abound with a small town atmosphere

The 2008 census for Whitefish showed a permanent population of 8,281 and over 20,000 within a ten mile radius of the church, with a median age of 37 years old. We have one Elementary; one Middle; and one High School. Wednesday night is Family Night throughout the community and there are typically no school activities that might conflict with a child’s decision to attend. Whitefish is focused on community and values our youth as productive members of society.

We at First Presbyterian Church of Whitefish are Biblically faithful and missionally minded. Our role in proclaiming the gospel is who we are; a group of giving and caring individuals who are active in the community.

CELEBRATING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

Members and visitors find the closeness and caring of the congregation welcoming. We are a friendly congregation which rates the social events of the church and the inherent sense of community they bring as important to our participation. When asked “What are the BEST parts of the First Presbyterian Church of Whitefish?” the congregation responded:

- Friendly, Family, Fellowship
- Location (Downtown, Beautiful Building)
- Active, Participatory Congregation
- Worship: Especially Music

There are many members to whom Bible study and Christian Education are important. We believe that in espousing the essentials of faith as revealed in the Scripture and set out in the confessional standards, God reveals Himself to us through Scripture, and that Scripture reveals a way of living consistent with God’s will.

Worship and Music

The Worship Committee is very active and open to change while maintaining the Holy Spirit’s call to bring people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to nurture their place in the fellowship of professing Christians. Thereby, we joyfully fulfill the first of the Great Ends of the Church in accordance with “...the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind...” (Book of Order G-1.02000).

At this time, there is one traditional Sunday service with Church School for children during the sermon. One of the Vision recommendations is to explore a more informal service like a Saturday evening “Coffee Shop” or an early morning Sunday service that might cater to the resort community and vacation travelers who cherish the outdoor lifestyle or work those periods in support of the local industries.

The Worship Committee has built a 3-Year rolling Roadmap that can be found at www.fpcwhitefish.org.

The Music Ministry has been changing and embracing a blended program in our Sunday worship service. Along with traditional hymns, Praise and Worship songs are sung. We have a very dedicated chancel choir. We host a multi-denominational bell choir that meets weekly. The feedback has been positive and the results encouraging.

Our Congregation

First Presbyterian Church in Whitefish, Montana is a small downtown church set in one of the most beautiful areas of the United States. Our congregation has a rich and diverse history and make-up; from native Montanans, transported “baby-boomers”, retired nature lovers and everything in between.

The general population of the church continues to age. Less than 5% of the church membership is under the age of 40. Attracting new members, especially the younger generation, is a key priority of the Vision Workshop.

Active Membership Roll = 117

<u>Age</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2010</u>
Under 18	9%	0%
19-40	10%	10%
41-64	47%	55%
65 and over	33%	35%

Sunday Service Average Attendance

2007 = 86 2008 = 74 2009 = 65 2010 = 50

The current roll reflects moving 23 members to inactive status in 2009. In 2010, 7 new members joined the church.

It is interesting to note that the highest attendance of 2010 was during the envisioning process. For the 2 Sundays following the Vision Workshop on Feb. 20, attendance increased to 68 and 75.

Fellowship

Fellowship takes on many roles, from congregational size events to small groups. The Fellowship Vision is to provide an atmosphere in which individuals can share their gifts and talents to strengthen the ties of love and friendship that bind us together as a community of faith. It is through nurturing one another in faith, supporting one another in times of need, and celebrating together, that we grow as the body of Christ in the world. The Fellowship Team offers a variety of church-wide and community-wide support through Deacons, Presbyterian Women, and use of our downtown facility. We host groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, the Alpine Theater Project, the North Valley Music School and Whitefish High School.

The Fellowship Committee has established a 3-Year rolling Roadmap that can be found at www.fpcwhitefish.org.

Mission

If supporting Mission work was graded, First Presbyterian would get an “A+”. Mission work can only be successful through the self-less giving of time, talents, and financial support. Our congregation places a strong emphasis upon this call of faith. We have active, committed Deacons and Elders who care for and minister to our members as well as others in the community. While this spiritual leadership fosters a sense of community within the church, it is not a substitute for the Pastor’s calling to help congregational members “be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

In 2010, the Mission Team provided outreach and support for:

- Shepherd’s Hand Clinic- A Weekly Free Health Clinic and Dinner
- Whitefish High School Lunch Program
- Providence Children’s Home
- Intermountain Children’s Home
- Habitat for Humanity
- Church Flower Sale - Mission Fundraiser
- Bike and Build (National Habitat for Humanity College Outreach)
- Glacier Presbyterian Camp
- North Valley Food Bank
- Mission Pledge PCUSA
- Intersivity Missoula
- Sister Church in Central America

The Mission Committee has developed a 3-Year rolling Roadmap that can be found at www.fpcwhitefish.org.

Education

The Education Committee guides our individual learning and spiritual growth through a structured curriculum and experiences that bring us closer to God. The committee continues to explore new and innovative methods and techniques in learning. The Team is working to establish a balance of strategies and programs to provide a Bible-based atmosphere fostering individual spiritual growth through the word of God. We are guided by the principle that God’s word is the standard.

Tuesday evening classes are offered for Adults during Advent, Lent and several other times per year. On Sunday mornings, there is a Children’s church for the 2 to 6 children that are currently attending service. Sunday morning adult classes were traditionally offered, but have not been held in the past 2 years.

The Education Committee has developed a 3-Year rolling Roadmap that can be found at www.fpcwhitefish.org.

First Presbyterian Church Vision and Goals

In November 2009, our church began a visioning process that encompassed long hours of dedicated service and participation from the members of the church family. The process was focused on the Scriptural principle of seeking God's will. In February 2010, 80% of the congregation participated in a Vision for the 21st Century Workshop.

In seeking God's direction for the church, a series of questions were generated, answered, reviewed in a public forum, and discussed to establish a consensus. Using this information, the individual committees formulated their 3-Year rolling Roadmaps. The questions and responses, compiled in priority order are:

1. What is the main function (job) of the Church?

- a. Preach, Teach, Worship, Inspire (Scripture Based)
- b. Evangelize (Proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, Intensify Spiritual Belief)
- c. Mission and Community Outreach

2. What are the BEST parts of FPC Whitefish?

- a. Friendly, Family, Fellowship
- b. Location (Downtown, Beautiful Building)
- c. Active, Participatory Congregation
- d. Worship: Especially Music

3. What are the challenges for FPC Whitefish?

- a. Preaching/Worship (Lack of Passion, Inspiration, Excitement)
- b. Pastor (Lack of Leadership, Spiritual Disconnect between Pastor and Members)
- c. Lack of Youth and Young Families
- d. Congregation and Member Care (Not Consistent, Lack of Visits)
- e. Communication and Administration
- f. Facility (Building not used to potential, Screen Issues, Front Entrance Not Inviting)
- g. Congregational Relationship (Criticism, Member Turnover)

4. What should we focus on in the next few years?

- a. Leadership (Change/Improve) and Worship (Inspiration, Bible-based Worship)
- b. Membership & Growth with emphasis on Youth, Young Families and Age Diversity
- c. Congregational and Community Care/Missions (Find ways to improve)
- d. Other (Learn from successful churches, Christian Education for All, Small Groups, Focus on Jesus)

Based on the responses, the Session and congregation see individual growth (spiritual and emotional) as foundational issues of Christian faith and life. As individuals grow in their personal relationship with Jesus so will the congregation in numbers and strength to serve as God's faithful servants.

New Pastor

The Pastor we seek should:

1. Give Bible-based sermons from which congregants come away feeling that they've learned something and have been inspired to action through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Have knowledge and a demonstrated ability to build the congregation. The desire to evangelize and teach the church to do the same.
3. Possess a strong traditional, Christ-centered Biblical approach to leading and teaching the essentials of faith as revealed in the Bible and set forth in the confessions.
4. Take the initiative to meet and develop a personal relationship with every willing member of the congregation. Make home visitations within 90 days of arriving. Attempt to do the same thing with as many inactive members as possible.
5. Meet and become familiar with members of the community outside of the church to lay the groundwork for evangelization.
6. Organize, facilitate, and supervise the work of the church and committees by attending meetings and offering wisdom and guidance.
7. Have a strong work ethic that inspires others by his/her example.
8. Have a heart for caring for the sick and lonely. A willingness to visit hospitals, nursing homes, shut-ins and jails if necessary.
9. Have a passion for missions and outreach.
10. Practice the powerful gift of prayer and help others to become enthusiastic prayers.
11. Within 90 days of arriving be able to express a vision for the church.
12. Be willing to take counsel and constructive criticism. Have a sense of humor.
13. Have a focus that specifically includes youth and associated programs.

New Pastor – cont.

In October 2009, the congregation completed a Pastoral Evaluation Survey that led to and supplemented the Visioning Workshop. One aspect of the Survey focused on, “**Importance of each aspect of Pastor’s work**”. The following areas were addressed with the subcategories listed in order of importance:

1. Overall leadership in the church
 - a. Leadership in energizing the church
 - b. Fostering a sense of community within the church
 - c. Leadership in developing a growing church community
 - d. Leadership in guiding the church to focus on achieving its vision/mission
 - e. Representation of FPC in the Community
2. Shepherding of the church congregation
 - a. Approachability
 - b. Caring for church family
 - c. Listening skills
 - d. Personal involvement in church activities
3. Spiritual leadership of the church
 - a. Sunday Sermons
 - b. Effect on the spiritual growth of FPC as a whole
 - c. Effect on personal spiritual growth
4. Administrative leadership of the church
 - a. Leadership of Session, Deacons, Volunteers
 - b. Oversight/supervision of church staff
 - c. Oversight of church operations
 - d. Problem solving skills