

# First Presbyterian Church

Renewal Task Force

April 29, 2019

## VIVID DESCRIPTION

First Presbyterian Church San Angelo embraces a rich history of faith, hope, love, and family. We are thankful for our ancestors and the strong foundation they set for our church in Christ. Their faith, through the struggles and sacrifices they endured for the mission of Christ, has molded us into the church we are today, and we humbly acknowledge that we would be lost without their wisdom as they point us towards a bright future.

What might we see if we as a church make it a priority to develop mutual friendships among the generations, friendships built on the foundation of faith in Christ, guiding, encouraging, and strengthening each of us as we grow in our knowledge of and love for Him? What if a young person found safety, wisdom, and kindness in an elder? What if an elder found connection and purpose in relationship with a youth? Do you see it? Do you see fifteen to twenty years from now a generation of twenty to thirty-year-olds aggressively pursuing God's love and fervently attempting to do His will?

Picture it: It's a chilly Saturday night in December and today's kids, now in their twenties, are gathered in our Commons area, full of excitement, waiting for a wedding to begin. Because of our college ministry at ASU, a young man and woman met and will get the chance to say "I Do" in our beautiful sanctuary. As the girl walks down the aisle, you notice that her white dress is a beautiful contrast to the red carpet and the red poinsettias that overflow the sanctuary during the Christmas season. As she climbs the steps, you can see the pure joy on her face as she approaches her husband-to-be. Tears of joy sparkle on her cheeks as she turns and sees her church family, spanning the generations, supporting her and celebrating with her. Looking back at her fiancé, she offers a silent prayer of thanksgiving to God for the college ministry that brought them together.

Picture it: The next Sunday morning is Christmas Cantata Sunday, and our choir can hardly fit in the choir loft. You see their faces glow as they watch while families and friends fill the pews and sit close together to squeeze one more visitor in. Dozens of children run around the sanctuary, filled with the enthusiasm only a child can bring, as they eagerly await this special service. The youth are hard at work selling poinsettias to raise money for the upcoming ski trip, and somehow we fill the sanctuary with even MORE poinsettias than there were at the wedding the night before. Our church has LIFE and WARMTH and BEAUTY that goes beyond the bricks and mortar. Abundant life in Christ radiates from the hearts and energy of the entire community as we lift our voices to praise God together.

During worship, a young man - now thirty years old – approaches the pulpit to read scripture. He pauses as he walks down the aisle to give an elderly woman a hug. Twenty years ago, when he was in fifth grade, this woman, who had chosen his prayer card as part of the church ministry to children, took him lunch at school one day. Little did she know, she saved him from a bully that day, and a special friendship began that was strengthened by her faithful prayer and outreach. Little did this young man know that he also saved her from depression that day. That week, when she brought him lunch, she struggled to leave the house. After being a widow for a year, sadness still weighed her down. Her step of faith and his grateful

response brought new life and purpose to her world. Today, she is so proud of him! Their long friendship has meant so much to them both.

Let's fast forward a few years.

Picture it: The newlyweds from ASU bring forth their newborn child for baptism. As the pastor commits this baby boy's life to Christ and water glistens off his head, an Elder approaches the pulpit to lead the congregation through our baptismal vows. We, the members, look upon this child with hope and love. We promise to pray for the boy and his parents. We promise to provide the kind of church home where he can grow up in the knowledge that God loves him. We make these promises – and we mean it.

Picture it: Later that week, the young man who read scripture is now part of a group of men who carry a casket down the aisle. The elderly woman, this young man's friend and mentor, now walks with Jesus in heaven. After placing the casket in the front of the sanctuary, the other men take a seat and he alone continues on to the pulpit to give the eulogy. He laughs and cries as he recounts many memories from their long friendship. His fondest memories of her are from the times spent together helping the homeless at the soup kitchen and listening as she told stories of her husband and his service at Goodfellow. As a military couple, they moved and traveled all over the world, but when they retired, they called San Angelo their home in large part because of their love for our church. In closing, the young man opens his Bible to the woman's favorite verse in Hebrews, reminding the congregation that we are to be a "cloud of witnesses" to those around us. This woman was living proof that if we want the next generation to thrive, we need to love them, we need to teach them, and we need to have faith in them.

Through it all, we picture the beautiful sacrificial lamb in the stained glass window above the balcony. Through that window we see the city of San Angelo and the rest of the world to which we are called to be disciples. Jesus's love and his sacrifice for us have set us on a mission that doesn't stop at our walls. We strive daily to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Our pastors, elders, deacons, and members seek out non-believers and actively invite them into our life of faith as we pray for God's will for this church. Jesus has faith in us, and we have faith in Him.

What picture do you see fifteen to twenty years from now? Do you see black and white? Or do you see WARMTH and COLOR? At First Presbyterian Church of San Angelo we desire to be a cloud of witnesses, a place that calls all generations into a flourishing faith in Jesus within our dynamic and loving community. When you enter these doors, you will know that you are home. As we follow God's call and paint this beautiful picture, know that what we do TODAY makes that picture BRIGHTER! Come join us!