

Foster Tukwila Presbyterian Church

14401 56th Avenue South ▪ Tukwila, Washington 98168

Who We Are

Foster Tukwila Presbyterian Church's motto is ***to know Christ and to make Him known***. To know Christ is to see him as the only way to eternal salvation, to increasingly know the inerrancy of his word as it is expressed in the Bible, and to be discipled in our relationships with him both corporately and individually. This is reflected in our hunger for solid biblical preaching, our desire to cooperate with God through the Holy Spirit in the work He is doing, as well as our desire to model our lives both individually and corporately after Christ. Parallel to our body's desire to know Christ is our desire to make Him known. We know that we must be active in our effort to share Christ and shine His light from the hill on which we are physically located to the community around us. Many have said that the footprint of FTFC within the city of Tukwila is larger than the size the congregation would otherwise suggest. That is due in part to our over 100 year history within the city.

FTFC was started in 1910 by Seattle First Presbyterian Church and was a part of the Seattle Presbytery of the PCUSA for over one hundred years. In 2015 we realized that ECO would be a better fit for our body with the convictions to which we remained committed such as a biblical definition of marriage, the sanctity of all human life, and most importantly, Jesus as the only way to eternal life. At that time we began the process of graciously separating from the PCUSA and transitioning to ECO. The congregation's transition period to ECO was characterized by profound peace and abundant unity. By the end of 2016 we were affiliated with ECO and presently have 90 covenant partners. In the summer of 2017 our sole pastor of 39 years sensed the Lord was leading him to retire from his call to pastor FTFC. He was released by the congregation with gratitude, celebration, and thankful hearts towards the wonderful kingdom work that was accomplished under his leadership. We know that God has good things ahead for us and are embracing this period of transition to a new pastor with expectation and anticipation of healthy change.



During these last three decades FTFC has used the diagram at left as a model of our Philosophy of Ministry. The core values from which we operate are reflected within these circles. First and foremost, we are a praying church; prayer is central to our identity as a body. We desire to be led by the Holy Spirit in times of prayer and attempt to be sensitive to kairos moments in corporate worship so that we can act in conjunction with what God is doing in real time among us. Prayer is our first response to hardship, our gateway to decisions, and a common denominator of the times we spend together.

The other circles of the Philosophy of Ministry accurately reflect who we are as a body as well. Our worship as a body is a reflection of our relationship with God through praise, surrender, and prayer. As a healing congregation we also believe people can experience wholeness in Christ through caring by the body and prayer in the name of Jesus. Our congregation also actively seeks to disciple its people by equipping them through teaching, the study of God's word, and the development of each individual's gifts as well. We believe each person has been uniquely gifted by God, and we encourage the body to not only know their spiritual gifting but to actively serve in those areas as well. Time and again we have seen individuals come to Foster to grow, become strengthened and equipped in their gifting, and then deployed to other ministries and missions. We also believe that as a church each one of us is deployed daily to live out our faith in Christ in practical ways as well as bring unsaved people to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Where We Are Located

Foster Tukwila Presbyterian Church is located in the city of Tukwila, Washington, a suburb south of downtown Seattle in western Washington State. The City of Tukwila often refers to itself as the “Community at the Crossroads” due to its geographic location near Sea-Tac International Airport and the intersection of major highways. This location brings economic activity and opportunity as well as attracts people from all over the United States and around the world. It is, therefore, an extremely diverse community of many races and ethnicities, of many different religions and world views, and of many different life experiences and cultural influences. The same can be said of the rest of the surrounding communities where the members of FTPC live and work.

Spiritually speaking, the area is part of the Greater Seattle-Tacoma area which has a reputation for being one of the most unchurched areas in the United States. A recent poll by the Barna Research Group says that even more than being “unchurched”, it is the third most “de-churched” metropolitan area in the country with 50% of the respondents to the telephone survey saying they had at one time been active in a church or religious organization but are no longer involved with it. Another part of the survey placed the Greater Seattle-Tacoma area as the 9th most “post-Christian” area of the country where individuals meet nine or more of 16 criteria which identify a lack of Christian identity, belief, and practice. These factors include whether individuals identify as atheist, have never made a commitment to Jesus, have not attended church in the last year, or have not read the Bible in the last week. Because of the high percentage of people in the community who do not attend church, who have dropped out of organized religion, or who even hold religious belief to be a negative social value, many people in the community have no solid moral underpinning for their lives.

Tukwila has large populations of many different people groups including white at 38.3%, black at 20.9%, Asian at 16.6%, and Hispanic at 14.7%. Many varied people groups and languages fill out the remainder of the 10%. The Tukwila School District is the most diverse in the nation with over 80 languages represented. Because the community is generally friendly and supportive of immigration and refugee resettlement, there are many Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other religions. There are also a number of Christian congregations based on a specific ethnic group or national origin. We host two such congregations at our facility at different times throughout the week including a Bhutanese-Nepalese Christian church as well as a Myanmar (Burmese) Christian congregation. They have dynamic ministries and outreaches within their ethnic communities, especially with the families of those who have been born in their representative countries.

Where We Are Right Now

As a congregation of faithful but aging members, we recognize our need to “grow young.” Many of our students who go away to college do not return, and we have noticed a downward trend in the number of families with young children as well. During the long tenure of our previous pastor, many of the families who raised their children in this body have made the progression to empty-nesters and retired folks. The body of FTPC desires to make changes in our programs, facility, and culture to retain our young people and young families as well as attract new families with young children. We acknowledge, however, that without the direction, presence, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit no program in and of itself is able to advance the kingdom of God.

Even with the downward trend of the younger generations, we have seen an increase in recent years in our mid-week youth programs. That being said, of the twenty-five teens in our youth group only seven are from church families. Most of the unchurched neighborhood kids do not attend, however, on Sunday morning. These kids from spiritually indifferent homes are welcomed, fed well, and loved on Tuesday nights, but their questions, needs, and energy level tend to overwhelm the atmosphere of the program; thus, our believing church kids often do not receive the discipleship they need. Our three

energetic volunteer youth leaders—including two 50+ year old male elders, and a 40+ year old female—serve alongside a female part time, paid youth director who is in her 20's. They have served lovingly and with joy, but we have no younger volunteers preparing to join them.

There are many volunteers from the body, however, for church hosted events such as making cookies and collecting supplies for our annual VBS in the city park and serving at the Trunk o' Treat festival we host for 500+ community members. Countless behind the scenes jobs are also taken care of by volunteers from the congregation, and as a church we acknowledge the richness of that blessing. More specifically, we have many members involved in one of three Service Teams who share a six-week rotation for accomplishing the duties required for a Sunday morning service to take place. The duties of the Service Teams include everything from passing the communion plates, to ushering, to offering prayer support after the service, to making snacks for the fellowship time after the service, to serving in the nursery. Some members of the congregation also actively volunteer for hands on community needs such as packing weekend meals for homeless school kids and other similar activities. As active in ministry as we are, we know that FTPC is not engaging in effective evangelism in a way that builds connections and relationships with our unchurched and unbelieving neighbors. Some of our members attend annual seminars at Missions Fest Seattle, but we know that this is an area of weakness for our body. We are actively looking into new ways to follow-up and retain visitors as well as seeking vision for new programs the Lord might desire to use to attract and minister to the community.

Our historic 1920's wood frame building is well-loved and well-used. The last major renovation of the physical worship space was completed in the 1990's. The 9,650 square foot building is heavily used throughout every week with activities in one form or another almost every night of the week. CEF trains monthly, and AA and a grief group meet weekly. Church activities such as youth group, Bible studies, session and committee meetings, as well as activities from the two ethnic Christian congregations make the physical space of the building highly used and more recently in need of significant renovation. We take care to schedule additional uses of the facility with discretion, respect, and flexibility and strive to steward the extra wear and tear of these shared uses with wisdom. In 2016 a refurbishing of the youth classrooms & nursery was completed. The fellowship hall also received new to the church but previously used chairs at that time. New carpets will be installed by early 2018 throughout the remainder of the church. Professional artwork that has been completed by a member gives the building added depth and beauty. We desire that the interior of our building accurately reflect the welcoming atmosphere that we aim to portray, but we realize that this is a work in progress.

Where We're Headed

We are a church with a long history of community presence, but we recognize that though the community around us has changed drastically in the last 30 years, our body has not completely reflected that change as we remain primarily a Caucasian congregation in one of the most diverse cities in the country. On a typical Sunday perhaps a dozen or so worshippers are of other ethnicities. We understand the value and importance of better reflecting the community that we are placed in. We recognize that in order to achieve this we will need to better embrace the second and third generation Americans we are surrounded by. We desire to reach the unchurched and unbelieving people of our community regardless of skin color and be a reflection of God's love in our community.

We believe that we are called to be an intergenerational church. Our Sunday school is aptly named Generations because of the large group style in which we begin our time together where preschoolers through senior citizens are interacting with one another to hear the main point of the lesson for the day. Our breakout groups that follow this intergenerational time accurately reflect the knowledge that though we are one body, different subgroups of members have different needs. We know that there is beauty in the body of Christ. We are a church family, and we embrace that wholeheartedly. This means that our church is encouraged to raise the youth corporately and to consistently cherish our elders. That

being said, with the aging average population of the church, we feel led to focus on the development of our youth and young families. A significant number in our congregation commute in from other cities, making growth through friendship evangelism in the immediate area more difficult. We are seeking the Lord's wisdom and direction to expand this younger cross-section of our body, and we are excited to see what the Lord has ahead.

We also remain committed to the calling to be a praying church and will endeavor to continue to operate in the supporting circles of our Philosophy of Ministry as well. We know that God has uniquely equipped us to minister through these methods and will continue to do so as the Spirit leads us. That being said, we have seen the Lord use seasons of change at FTPC to strengthen and refine our body, and we fully expect to see that happen during this current season of change in pastoral leadership as well. God is leading and guiding us, and we will remain faithful to his calling. We are praying for wisdom for our own body during this time of transition and for the next pastor that God will call to lead our body.