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ABOVE ALL, LOVE



Long Range Planning Committee Update
Thompson Memorial Presbyterian Church
October 2022

PASTOR'S NOTE

Over the past two or three years, the world has become fractured.

Sometimes we have been separated physically and sometimes there have been painful emotional distances between people. The seasons of isolation have harmed us and increased divisions. We believe that it is not only our job, but our call to bring people together in the name of love.

This plan is an update on the work of the Long Range Planning Committee. The elements of this plan seek to reconnect people inside the church with each other and to connect the love of God we experience at Thompson, a love that pours out in worship, in service and in friendship, with each other, our local community and beyond.

**ABOVE ALL,
LOVE
COLOSSIANS
3:14**

In Colossians 3, Paul writes, *Above all, love binds us together in perfect harmony.* This is our belief and this is our goal.

We know that the power of God's love can reconnect us and bind us together. So many of you have experienced the tangible love of Jesus at Thompson. So why not use the best gift God has given us for healing wounds and lifting spirits?

In a song I heard recently, Tish Melton sang the words: *To belong, you need to feel loved,* and I can't think of anything that is more Christlike than loving and giving people a place of belonging.

It is really lofty goal to think we can reunite the world.

But what if, just one of our neighbors was welcomed into this community with open arms? Or one division was torn down? Or one person heard about the love of Jesus for the first time? I think that would be a great start. And so, I invite you to join me in reprioritizing your life and our mission to be about:

Above all, love,

Stephanie



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PROCESS

The Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) sees its purpose being to discern a path forward for TMPC and turn our passion in action. The LRPC began its work in January of 2021 under the leadership of Annie Lo. Annie relocated later that year and Rick Schaub was welcomed as the new chair. The team was comprised of varied viewpoints, ages, worship service attendants, and opinions. The diversity of thought and perspective served as a broad lens to the needs and ideas of the church.

At each monthly meeting, the committee read a relevant article pertaining to church development and growth. This stimulated extensive conversation that helped to gauge whether our ideas were on track with church trends across the country. Often the articles confirmed the team's intuition and allowed the team to better see the amazing gifts already present in TMPC's congregation.

The LRPC conducted a congregational survey in July 2021 that validated our focus areas: Growth & Outreach, Intentional Faith Development and Ministry to Children & Families. These focus areas served as the foundation for the development of our Core Values, Mission & Vision and go-forward Strategies all of which are shared in the pages that follow.



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SABRINA GREEN



SHAUN ROBBINS



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SURVEY

In July of 2021, the team fielded a congregational survey on critical areas of growth and development for TMPC. Fifty-three (53) responses were received.

The congregation identified the following three focus areas:

GROWTH AND OUTREACH

We seek to grow our membership. We would like to put a strong emphasis on growth to attract new members to our community and enhance the visitor experience at TMPC.

INTENTIONAL FAITH DEVELOPMENT

By providing new and meaningful spiritual experiences, we believe that we can deepen the faith of our community .

MINISTRY TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

We want to be proactive in our ministry to young families. We will develop strategies that will engage young families in our community .

The team shared the survey information with the Session in August of 2021 and conducted a congregational workshop in October 2021 for collaboration and brainstorming.



CORE VALUES

As we compiled the survey results, we noticed several themes emerge about the nature of how the congregation saw itself and the values it wanted to embody. These themes pointed us to the Core Values found on the next page.

In April 2022 the Session met to review the core values and to pray about what scripture we wanted to guide us into our future. The entire Session was unified that it is the love of God that defines us, guides us and matters most. In our time together, the Session was energized by:

Above all, Love

These three words appears twice in scripture and the LRPC settled on this text from Colossians 3:14: *Above all, love binds us together.* We are choosing to claim this excerpt from scripture as our motto.



Welcome

We seek to be love by modeling the God who welcomes with open arms.

In the story of the Prodigal son, the father waits with open arms while the son is still far off. We believe in a God who waits for us and welcomes us no matter where we are, who we are or where we have been. God loves by welcoming and providing a place of belonging for all.

Worship

We seek to be loving by worshipping God with our whole hearts.

It's no secret that we have divided loyalties and too often, our worship life is an afterthought. We seek to love by worshipping fully and passionately, expressing our love for God in song, word and prayer and prioritizing worship as the most important act of our lives.

CORE VALUES

Grow

We seek to be love by growing in faith and in numbers.

Faith in God is active, not passive. We believe that love is multiplied when we are invested in our faith and in the faith of others. We grow in love through study, fellowship and prayer.

We want to experience this overflowing love through small groups, fellowship and Christian community.

Serve

We seek to be loving by serving others.

We live in a world that prioritizes self over service. The way of Jesus is different. In order to lead a Christ-centered life, we have to love others by serving others. Jesus says that there is no greater love than laying down your life for others.

MISSION AND VISION



To ground us and guide us, we established simple mission and vision statements. The Mission statement answers the question - why do we exist? The Vision statement answers the question - who do we want to be?

Mission: We are a community of people that want to know Christ and through his teachings we seek to welcome all, worship fully, grow in faith, and serve others.

Vision: To be a uniting force in our community and in our world that brings people together through the love of Jesus.



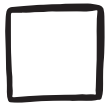
STRATEGIC THEMES



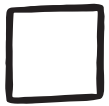
Once the Core Values, Mission and Vision were in place, the LRPC set out to discern 5 powerful strategies that would best advance us toward our Vision. After months of discernment, review, and reflection, the following strategic themes emerged:



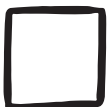
LIFE CHANGING WORSHIP



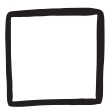
ENHANCE THE TMPC DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



INTENTIONAL OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



DEVELOP A ROBUST SMALL GROUP NETWORK



ENGAGE IN A SIGNATURE MISSION



LIFE CHANGING WORSHIP



Worship is our central function and we exist to praise and worship God. In many of our conversations, our members expressed great love for both worship services and they didn't want to see big changes in our worship styles. We love having both a traditional service and a contemporary service to enhance one's spiritual experience.

Several comments and conversations pointed to a desire for some upgrades and enhancements, as well as special musicians or supplements to provide extra depth and spiritual connection. We want every member to walk away from worship with a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit every single Sunday and we want to prioritize strengthening our worship experience so that it is always a "wouldn't want to miss it" event that brings people closer to Jesus.



ENHANCE THE TMPC DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



TMPC has done an excellent job of pivoting quickly over the last two years to allow for online worship experiences. People who are traveling, feeling ill or simply prefer the comfort of their home can be a part of our worship experience. We thank God for this opportunity!

We still do not fully understand how the online experience impacts our in-person church settings or what God is doing through this medium. What we do know is that people are watching from all over the country and even several global locations.

We do want to utilize technology to provide more ministry opportunities for both our current members and people in the community who are looking for a church home.

We plan to explore how we can make faith connections in education, by providing online opportunities, and by streamlining sign ups and information sharing. Technology can offer so much.

Imagine how amazing it would be to meet the apostle Paul virtually or to be immersed in Nazareth while hearing scripture. The possibilities are endless and we want to do whatever we can to connect faith to those who long to know Jesus better.



INTENTIONAL OUTREACH & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



In all of our surveys and meetings, there was a clear desire to do a better job engaging our surrounding communities. Ideas poured in that ranged from participation in local parades, festivals, and fairs, as well as hosting more events at TMPC that focused on bringing the community in.

We intend to improve our digital experience for those looking to join our church, making the use of the website EASIER for members and TMPC friends, getting members to use our site more, improving the volunteer sign up experience, etc.

TMPC loves it's surrounding communities and wants to be fully engaged with our neighbors.

This tenet was central to all of our reading and research about thriving churches. The church needs to engage outside it's walls and we are ready to do that!



DEVELOP A ROBUST SMALL GROUP NETWORK



Faithful worship is an incredible experience of growing close to Jesus, but in a large group, it is hard to get to know people closely.

We have seen deep relationships form in the exploration of faith through prayer and study in small group settings. We want this experience to be available to all people.

The Long Range Plan seeks to broaden and deepen engagement in small groups. These groups will function in both traditional Bible study formats with added focus on community building and social groups.

We aim to create a network that is easy for people to join and participate no matter what age or stage you find yourself in.



ENGAGE IN A SIGNATURE MISSION

Thompson began exploring the PC (USA) Matthew 25 designation earlier this year.

A Matthew 25 church commits to focusing on one of the components of this scripture passage and seeks to begin a dialogue and take action that addresses the issue.

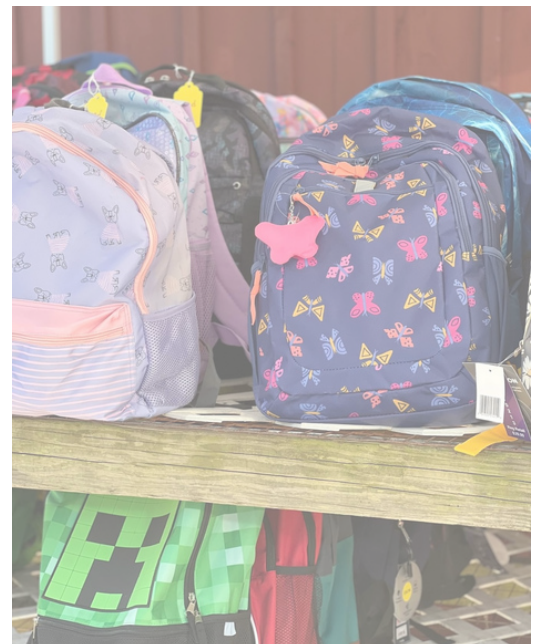
After a worship series on poverty and Session discussions, a team was set up to discuss what it would look like for TMPC to make a serious commitment to the Matthew 25 principles by specifically focusing on systemic poverty.

TMPC hopes to engage the Matthew 25 initiative by seeking to partner with local groups to work toward addressing systems that keep people in poverty.

This strategy will focus our mission efforts to make real differences in our community.

'FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD, I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME DRINK, I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME, I WAS NAKED AND YOU CLOTHED ME, I WAS SICK AND YOU VISITED ME, I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU CAME TO ME.'

MATTHEW 25



WHAT'S NEXT?



The LRPC has established five teams to focus on our five strategic themes and appointed leaders for each. These leaders are now assembling teams that will develop and begin executing action plans. We expect these action plans to take 1-3 years to complete. The team leaders will coordinate with pertinent staff and committees to ensure cross-collaboration and communication.

On **October 9th**, the LRPC will present the components of the plan during The Common Hour.

On **Tuesday, October 18th**, the LRPC will host a virtual information session at 7pm. Look for the link in e-news.

On **October 30th**, during and after worship, there will be time to ask questions and, should you be interested, sign up for one of the five teams.

Closing Note

In nearly every youth group or team building activity I've seen, at some point in time the leader brings out a ball of yarn and, as people stand in a circle, the yarn is thrown and caught until a web is formed. Everyone is connected.

For the people of God, the yarn that connects us is the love of Jesus. It is now time for each of us to step into the circle, hold our portion and toss the ball to connect more people and more hearts to what God is doing in this place and in the world.

Because no matter what separates us or divides us, above all, it is love that unites us.

Stephanie

