



NEW BEGINNINGS

Moving Forward Report

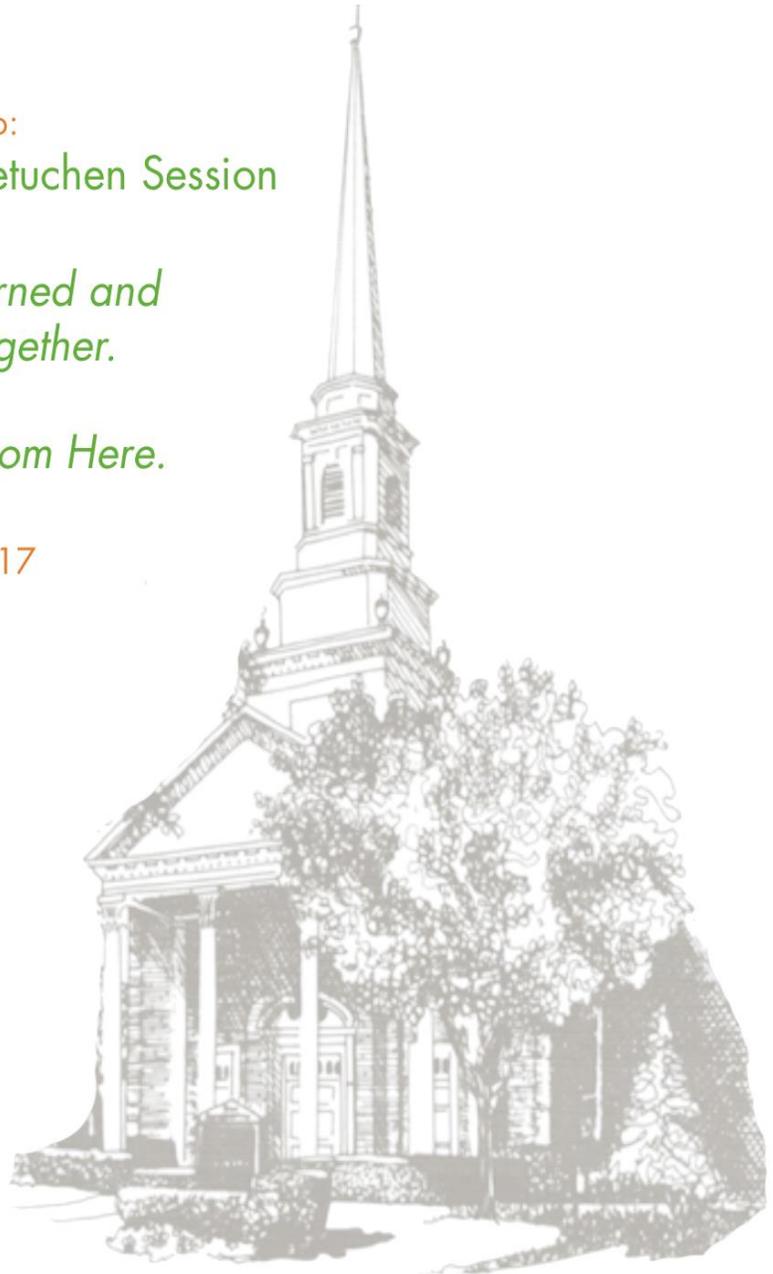
Presented to:

First Presbyterian of Metuchen Session

*What We've Learned and
Accomplished Together.*

Where We Go from Here.

May 23, 2017



Presented by New Beginnings Strategic Planning Committee (NB SPC)

Jan Margolis, Chair; Staci Gil; Bill Jeney; Caitlin Molison; Jane Meyer; Gary Ostermueller; Matt Redshaw; Kristine Rosko

OVERVIEW

Since January 2015, First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen has been on a journey to discover what God is calling us to be and do in our community in the 21st century. Nearly 200 members have actively participated in the first three phases of this New Beginnings process:

1. Assessment
2. Small group discussions
3. Strategic planning

As a result of this work, major changes are being implemented:

- The new church mission and vision statements are being integrated into all church programming.
- A Pastor Nominating Committee is beginning the search for a permanently installed senior pastor.
- Roles and responsibilities for commissions have been defined and church bylaws have been updated.
- Church leaders have been trained.
- A new staffing model is being implemented to meet the needs of our church and community.
- Computer technology is being updated to streamline church processes and better communicate with our members and our community.
- More than 20 church programs are being executed in alignment with New Beginnings findings. (See page 6: Accomplishments to Date)

Now it's time to *institutionalize* what we learned in this process and plan how to *keep the momentum going*.

To accomplish these goals, the New Beginnings Strategic Planning Committee has prepared this Transition Plan, which includes the following recommended actions:

1. Broadly communicate and support what we've *learned* and *accomplished* together.
2. Develop an action plan for accomplishing goals that were identified through the New Beginnings process.

"First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen is a vibrant congregation that traces its history back to the American colonies. With centuries of adaptation and change behind them, this church eagerly approaches its 300th birthday celebration.

... the congregation sits at the brink of new possibilities, excited about the next step of their faith journey. As they look toward the future, they recognize the growing diversity and amazing cultural shifts taking place in the community. The church has decided to take a closer look at itself in order to explore more effective ways to do ministry in this time and place."

(New Beginnings Assessment Report, January 2015)

ACTION ITEM 1:

Broadly Communicate and Support What We've Learned and Accomplished Together

To keep the momentum going and guide future thinking, church leaders and members need to understand what we learned from the New Beginnings process so they can integrate these learnings into all church programming. These learnings include:

- Core concepts
- Priorities from New Beginnings small groups, the special Session retreat, and community experts

The New Beginnings Strategic Planning Committee will present a Second Hour Forum to the congregation on June 11. The presentation will include:

1. What We've Learned: Core Concepts

Thriving churches are those that not only nurture their own members but also serve their communities. (New Beginnings)

Conversely - "The most common factor in declining churches is an inward focus. In declining churches, ministries are only for their members, church funds are used almost exclusively to meet the needs of their members, and the times of worship and worship styles are geared primarily for their members. Conflict takes place when members don't get things their way."
(Thom Rainer)

Action: Align all church programs with First Presbyterian's mission and vision.

Mission: We are a welcoming and diverse congregation that serves God by improving the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of people in our community and beyond through worship, education, fellowship, music, and mission outreach.

Vision: To be an all-inclusive, connected, and loving community mobilized to serve Jesus Christ.

First Presbyterian is a very active church with committed, engaged members who support a wide variety of internal and external programs.

First Presbyterian is a program-type church, meaning that it has many programs for many people. Pastors of program churches need different skill sets than significantly smaller family or pastoral churches or for that matter, significantly larger corporate churches.

Action: First Presbyterian's Mission Study Report, which was prepared for and accepted by the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM), includes information about our program church as well as the qualifications required for our permanently installed senior pastor. The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is incorporating this information into its search for and selection of a permanently installed senior pastor.

For new innovative, impactful programs to be successfully implemented, they must come from a passionate, committed person/committee/group willing to take ownership of the program and work through the church's organizational structure.

Action: A *Roles and Responsibilities for Commissions and Committees* document was developed and implemented to guide commissions/committees. Additional action will be needed to help people/groups who have new ideas easily navigate the church's system.

Internal and external outreach needs to adapt to today's communication styles and our church's and community's changing needs. Church staff members need to have the appropriate skills to lead this effort.

Action: As required by the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, an updated staffing model was researched and presented to the Personnel Commission to be adopted as the Commission and Session see fit. The model includes addition of a communication coordinator and a food pantry coordinator.

A "simple church" concept can be helpful for clarifying a church's mission and focusing programs to achieve maximum impact. (Reference: "Simple Church" by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger)

Recommended Action: With limited resources and volunteer time, there should be an annual review of all programs to ensure alignment with First Presbyterian's mission and vision. This review will help commissions and committees focus and prioritize their programs.

It's important to have a church-wide process for inviting and integrating new members into the life of our church. (Simple Church concept)

Recommended Action: Develop a small-group program to integrate new members and develop a pathway for them to be nurtured, learn about church ministries, and participate as church leaders.

Our lay leaders -- elders, deacons, and commission chairs want training.

Action: Rev. Clemot implemented elder/deacon training in 2016. Additional training will be included in 2017 and integrated as part of yearly leadership transition. The church bylaws have been updated to clarify church systems and processes. The *Roles and Responsibilities for Commissions and Committees* document will be incorporated into the training.

2. What We've Learned: Priorities from New Beginnings Small Groups, the Special Session Retreat, and Community Experts.

See "Compilation of Input," pages 8 – 11.

Action: Share the "Compilation of Input" report with church leaders and members as idea starters for future programming.

3. What We've Accomplished

See "Accomplishments to Date," page 6.

ACTION ITEM 2:

Develop an Action Plan for Goals Identified Through the New Beginnings Process

Based on the New Beginnings small group recommendations, suggestions from the special Session retreat, and meetings with community experts, the New Beginnings Strategic Planning Committee recommends that a long-term action plan be developed and implemented. The following initiatives are presented for consideration. Note that several of these initiatives are already being implemented.

- **Develop** partnerships with community organizations to expand church ministries beyond our walls. Establish First Presbyterian as a recognized center for community worship, education, fellowship, music, and mission.
- **Develop** a communication strategy to effectively convey our church's worship and outreach to our members and our community via the website, Facebook, Constant Contact emails, etc.
- **Identify** and implement ways for more people to get involved in church activities and leadership.
- **Expand** lay leader training to include a section on commission/committee roles and responsibilities, New Beginnings core concepts, and tips for conducting effective meetings and constructively handling differing opinions.
- **Create** and implement a small-group ministry for spiritual development for members and non-members. This ministry should establish a pathway for new members to be spiritually nurtured and integrated into the life of the church.
- **Create** a ministry to nurture our own members, especially those who are homebound or can no longer attend church.
- **Create** a means by which to educate and inspire members to become lay leaders and participate in commissions/committees and church ministries.
- **Explore** alternative formats and times for worship services.
- **Establish** a Planning Commission reporting to Session to guide and facilitate future thinking so that First Presbyterian stays relevant and engaged for its members and the community at large. Session should take ownership of planning to keep the church active and relevant.
- **Establish** a mechanism for continual evaluation of goals, programs, and achievements.

Accomplishments to Date

The New Beginnings initiative has been wholeheartedly embraced by First Presbyterian's members and leaders. Many people participated in the initial "discovery" phase via small groups, then Session took the lead in moving the process forward through a strategic-planning process. Commissions and committees were active in aligning their key priorities with our mission and vision to implement impactful programs that are serving our congregation and our community. **Thank you for your commitment to this change process and for helping First Presbyterian become an all-inclusive, connected, and loving community mobilized to serve!**

The following are commission program priorities for 2016/2017 that demonstrate our collective commitment for the future of our church and community.

- Host a free community dinner once a month. Average attendance is 90.
- Conduct a 300th anniversary outreach event each month.
- Provide fellowship to parents of nursery age children.
- Implement adult small-group studies.
- Host a health fair.
- Develop a new church photo directory.
- Raise awareness of social issues within local and national communities among Youth Group participants.
- Change the structure of 30-Hour Famine to increase awareness of community poverty and create projects that will help those on a local level.
- Promote local mission nights for Youth Group, including two Wednesday night community service activities in place of Youth Group.
- Integrate community outreach so youth can better serve the surrounding community.
- Implement a Young Adult Fellowship group for those 21 to 30.
- Create and maintain a group of reliable leaders who will create a cohesive team and be available to assist with planning and running Youth Group.
- Transform/expand the food pantry.
- Develop a social-justice platform.
- Educate the congregation about benevolence grants.
- Develop enhanced financial reporting.
- Upgrade the church computer system and the Church Management System (CMS) software.
- Conduct office staff training on the latest computer technology and CMS.
- Obtain enhanced returns for the endowment fund.
- Conduct an effective 2018 pledge campaign to support the church budget.
- Present a planned giving education program to support our future financial needs.

THANK YOU to Everyone Who Made New Beginnings Successful!

New Beginnings Committee:

Amy Bellisano, Phyllis Black, Collin Draper, Bob Hale, Eileen Harkless, Charles Hedrick, Jane Meyer, Bill Marquard, Gary Ostermueller, Rev. Mercy Rumengan

Small Group Leaders:

Janet Aspinwall, Pete Bellisano, Lisa Campbell, Carol Carr, Dan Cook, Maggy Cook, Crista Coventry-Cox, Bryan DeJonge, Tracy DeJonge, Collin Draper, Mike Draper, Ruth Endicott, Doris Gulotta, Paul Gunsser, Nancy Gurzo, Heidi Hoffsommer, Jim Krauszer, Donna Lambdin, Alicia Lewis, Sue Marquard, Linda Lee Mundy, Kathy Kovach-Orr, Rob Orr, Cathy Ostermueller, Brenda Redshaw, Don Robinson, Kristine Rosko, Claartje Ruhukay, Karen Ryder, Dave Ryder, Christian Senduk, Virginia Shaw, Oloan Silalahi, Sandy Slobodien, Norma Tambingon, Deb Teall, Jennifer Thompson, Jim Thompson, Christine Young

All Small Group Participants (152)

Elders on Session 2015 – 2017

Strategic Planning Committee:

Stacy Gil, Bill Jeney, Jan Margolis, Jane Meyer, Caitlin Mollison, Gary Ostermueller, Matt Redshaw, Kristine Rosko

COMPILATION OF INPUT FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN MEMBERS, SESSION, AND COMMUNITY EXPERTS

The following document is a final compilation of input received from:

- 152 participants in 18 New Beginnings small groups conducted September through October 2015
- Special Session retreat held on January 9, 2016
- Presentations by community experts March through April 2016

Some of the ideas have been implemented, some are in the process of being implemented, and others haven't been undertaken yet.

This document is included in the Transition Plan to ensure that all the ideas from the many people who have participated in the New Beginnings process are available for consideration over time.

COMPILATION OF INPUT

From New Beginnings Small Groups, the Special Session Retreat and Community Experts

Broad categories 1 to 10 are listed in order from most requested to least requested.

NB = From New Beginnings Small Groups

SS = From Special Session Retreat

SHF = From Community Experts Second Hour Forums

1. COMMUNITY OUTREACH – Suggested Activities

Host Community Wide Events

(blood drives, bicycle safety, prescription drug disposal, senior citizen, music, etc. **(NB)**)

- Experiment with a new community service project. **(SS)**
- Activities with direct contact that build relationships with those served, such as service to wider community, hot meals, mission trips, tutoring school children, etc. **(SS)**
- Welcome program for new community residents, and church visitors and new members. Include information about First Presbyterian groups that they can join. **(NB)**
- Education ministry around financial literacy, first aid certification, babysitting classes, etc. **(NB)**
- “Soul of the community” events; celebrate community contributors. **(NB)**
- Prayer hotline or mental health services. **(NB)**
- Information about FPC to all groups that use our facilities, booths at street fairs, VBS, etc. **(NB)**
- Pedestrian safety: Get involved with Metuchen Street Smart program. **(SHF)**

Target Families with Children **(NB)**

- Single-parent support groups. **(NB)**
- Invite non-member families whose children are involved in youth group, VBS, etc. to participate in church activities as a family. **(NB)**
- Foster care program. **(NB)**
- Charity and family time activities (parents educating children re: giving back). **(SHF)**
- Support and sharing of resources for parents who are in the “sandwich” generation, caring for young children and aging parents. **(SHF)**
- After-school support for kids, e.g., after-school center where kids can get together, have fun, do homework, and be safe. This could be an intergenerational group. **(SHF)**
- Help kids learn how to advocate for themselves, collaborate, etc. **(SHF)**
- Drop-in center for kids to have events, obtain social skills, interact, etc., a place where they can learn independence. **(SHF)**
- Parent education. **(SHF)**

Provide Programs and Assistance for Seniors

- Facilitate transportation, help with chores, rides, services, etc. (handy helpers, transportation helpers). **(NB)**
- "Lawn crusher" or "tool around" initiative, where able-bodied volunteers help with spring cleanup or yard work for those in need, such as seniors and others with a need. **(SHF)**
- Intergenerational groups, e.g., writer’s group with seniors/kids. **(SHF)**
- Socialization program for seniors. **(SHF)**
- Seniors write notes to people on the prayer list. **(SHF)**
- Assistance and training on computers and other technology. **(SHF)**
- Training for people who want to work with seniors. **(SHF)**

Implement Programs for Un/Underserved People

(singles, young marrieds, new parents, empty nesters, retirees, etc.) (NB)

Implement Tutoring and Business Mentoring Programs (NB)

- Community outreach for commuters. (NB)

Expand Successful Existing Programs (NB)

- Ballfield usage: carnival, labyrinth, concerts, movie nights, etc. Include signage about church programs/resources. (NB)
- Food pantry, either in terms of number of families served and/or services provided. Include FPC literature and gift bags for kids in food bags. Conduct cooking/shopping-on-a-budget classes. (NB)
- Music program into the community, e.g., open events for community members to participate. (NB)
- Social center use as a community emergency center. (NB)
- Increase exposure of our church by having an interactive presence at community events, such as the Metuchen Country Fair and the spring street fair. (NB)

Participate in Interdenominational Programs to Help Drive Positive Change (SHF)

- Coordinate efforts with other faith groups and organizations to meet community needs. (NB)

2. PLANNING – Suggested Activities

Identify Community Needs (NB) (SS)

Examine What We Do

- Clarify committee structures. Revamp and re-evaluate. Conduct an operational review. (NB)
- Conduct honest evaluation of resources, financial and human. Leverage resources in new and different ways. (NB)

Assess Member Needs

- Assess spiritual growth needs of all generations. (SS)
- Identify interests/talents/resources of members. (NB)

Establish a Mechanism for Continual Evaluation of Goals and Achievements (NB)

Develop a Comprehensive Communication Strategy - Internal and External, Using All Media. (NB)

3. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT – Suggested Activities

Encourage Absentee Members to Return (NB)

Encourage All Members to be More Welcoming (NB)

Organize Programs and Ministries Around Smaller Groups (NB)

- Partnership mentor programs: youth/seniors; new members/existing members. (NB)
- Programs for singles, young adults in their 20s and 30s, and couples without children. (NB)
- Intergenerational activities. (NB)
- Multicultural activities. (NB)

4. MISSION – Suggested Activities

Develop and Promote Short-Term Mission Volunteer Opportunities (NB)

5. **WORSHIP – Suggested Activities**
 - Provide Alternative Times for Worship (NB)
 - Implement a Variety of Worship Service Types and Expand Participation (NB) (SS)
6. **COMMUNICATION – Suggested Activities**
 - Develop a Comprehensive Communication Strategy for the Community at Large (NB)
 - Develop a Communication Strategy, Including Signage (SS)
 - Implement Communication Activities Via Social Media, Website, Becoming a Hub for Community Outreach and Welcome Wagon for New Residents (SS)
7. **EDUCATION – Suggested Activities**
 - Provide Member Education on Mission, Community Service and Volunteer Opportunities (NB)
 - Develop Spiritual Development Activities Whose Purpose Is to Direct Spiritual or Discipleship Growth, Such as Prayer Groups, Bible Studies, Sunday School Classes, Second Hour Forums, etc. (NB) (SS)
8. **LEADERSHIP TRAINING – Suggested Activities**
 - Train Elders and Deacons (NB)
 - Create a Job Description Booklet for FPC Boards, Commissions, Committees (NB)
 - Train Lay Leaders on Leadership Skills: Key for Successful Program Churches (NB) (SS)
 - Train Members on "How to Get Involved" to Stimulate Participation, Identify Volunteer Opportunities (NB)
 - Make It Obvious that Volunteers Are Needed and Appreciated (NB)
9. **STAFFING – Suggested Activities**
 - Have a Consistent, Long-Term Leadership Plan for Youth Groups (NB) (SS)
 - Hire a Communications/PR/Marketing Person (NB)
10. **FACILITIES – Suggested Activities**
 - Renovate the Chapel to Meet Future Needs (NB)
 - Create Better Space in the Education Building to Encourage More Participation at Fellowship Times (NB)
 - Repair and Improve Signage (NB)
 - Improve Our Technology (NB)