
NEW YORK CITY PRESBYTERY

Vision Statement

The Presbytery of New York City:

Embodying God's Love

Proclaiming God's Word

Promoting God's Justice

Growing in Faith and Size, Seeking the Welfare of the City.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, our Mission as the Presbytery of New York City is to embody God's gracious love in Jesus Christ through our ministries, our congregations, our partnerships, our service and witness, and our common life together. As a manifestation of Christ's body, we proclaim God's Word and promote God's justice throughout New York City and around the world, striving to grow in faith and size so that all may hear and experience the Good News of Jesus Christ.

STRATEGIC PLAN

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I. Whose We Are

At the beginning of his letter to the people of Corinth Paul asked the question: “Whom do you serve? Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas... or Christ?” In New York City Presbytery we all seek to serve Christ, but the face of Christ seems to appear differently to each of us, and often we do not stop to learn how it appears to others. The urgency of bringing the message, the urgency of evangelism, the urgency of justice, and the prevailing urgency of witness in a city full of need often inhibits us from stopping to perceive how others see Christ. But if we are truly to represent the Reformed witness to the most diverse city in the world, listening to the Christ in each other must form the central nourishing energy of what we do together. For listening leads to understanding, and understanding leads to wisdom, and wisdom leads to faithfulness and faithfulness leads to a greater possibility of moving Christ’s Kingdom forward. “Let us bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. So, then, whenever we have an opportunity let us work for the good of all, and especially for the family of faith”. (Galatians 6: 2, 10).

II. Where We Are

New York City: A city of over eight million souls who come from around the world and across the United States. Some people live amidst cascades of wealth while others struggle for daily survival. There are towering opportunities, and there are very real structures of limitation. The ministries of the Presbytery of New York City occur within this city of hope and struggle . . . within a nation torn between competing trends of generosity, expanding systems of injustice, heartwarming active compassion, and self-interest in idolatrous proportions . . . and within an international context marked by increasing networks of relationship and tragic inequality and violence on an epic scale.

The power of the Holy Spirit, the redemptive passions of the human heart, and the political realities of choice available to us mean that a great potential hovers over all that we dream in our ministry, and amidst all that we can hope to achieve.

III. Who We Are

The Presbytery of New York City includes approximately 110 congregations and worshipping communities spread across the five boroughs. This community is nearly as diverse as the city itself. Its diversity includes race, nationality, gender, wealth, poverty, politics, sexual orientation, culture, education, and place of birth. However, individual congregations are relatively homogenous, making it difficult to celebrate the gifts of the spirit in a single setting or way. We find ourselves called to Christian love for people of many different persuasions in the hope that our common ministry will transform, refresh, and fulfill the world’s deepest hopes. This call is both exhilarating and daunting.

IV. What We're Doing Now

In 2003 the Presbytery of New York City began writing a new mission statement. There was energy and enthusiasm... and doubt and distrust, all present in the members and congregations of the Presbytery. The mission statement took a year to complete. General Council took on the next step with enthusiasm, designing strategy for putting the mission and the vision in place. The workgroup, consisting of 2004-2006 Council members, an additional invitee from each council and committee, and a few others to 'round out' the group, met from May through December of 2005.

Any strategy is made real by those who convey it and those who carry it out, and by the opportunities and challenges present in the system itself and in the surrounding culture. In the Presbyterian system, and particularly in The Presbytery of New York City, many voices work together to speak and act together. The goals presented here challenge us to do that.

This strategy paper takes a major new turn: it challenges the congregations to a 'self-assessment', (see 'Strengthening Congregations' and Addendum II) to discern and define where they are in their congregational life so that the larger body of the Presbytery, working collegially, can join in applying human resources and assistance where they are most needed and in the ways that are most helpful. If we are able to do this, it will begin a bold new way of working together and a faithful attempt at following our own rules: to apply resources to promising points of ministry.

A. Challenges

Over the last fifty years the presbytery has declined in membership from more than 55,000 to less than 18,000 while the number of congregations has remained constant. Our median congregation is unusually small. Leadership is often strained and tired. Lively, growing congregations evoke respect and provide valued leadership, but also experience envy. In many places, problems grow old and fester unresolved. We are called to new patterns, new kinds of leadership, and new approaches to stewardship.

Our buildings are in various states of age, repair, and use. Many small churches lack enough income from pledges to sustain ministry and maintain their facilities. When congregations rent space, their tenants may or may not enhance the mission of the congregation. Sometimes tenants thrive despite the congregation's decline. With real estate at a premium, congregations themselves and the entire Presbytery struggle with questions of use, subsidy, and even sale of property. Most congregations rely solely upon their annual income though some have endowments and find that the responsible use of that income for mission creates additional challenges. The Presbytery itself has an investment portfolio in excess of twenty million dollars and a carefully monitored policy determining the rate of its use.

B. Needs

The needs of the churches and the people in this Presbytery are many, sometimes in competition with each other.

1. The Presbytery needs:

- a.. Leadership that understands that our diverse membership has differing understandings of spiritual renewal, education, stewardship, and leadership.

- b. A recognition that renewal will probably take different forms in different places.
 - c. A way of connecting the spirit present in congregational life with the resources of the gathered Presbytery
 - d. A theology of stewardship that looks to the future with hope.
 - e.. Ministries that focus on attracting youth, young adults, and young families to our churches.
2. We believe that our congregations need:
- a. Clear, appropriate opportunities for spiritual renewal, education, leadership development
 - b. New paradigms of church life to supplement and sometimes replace “familial” patterns of interaction in small congregations that offer satisfaction and real support, but which make it difficult for new people to feel at home.
 - c. Ways to discuss social issues and make mission commitments
 - d. Assistance in times of crisis and transition; creating and implementing a vision for renewal
 - e. Understanding of values and resources of the Reformed tradition and polity

C. Opportunities

This plan celebrates new opportunities and resources. Some of them are:

1. We have new staff leadership with a high level of ability and respect
2. We can now use information technology to ease communication and share helpful, exciting information quickly and easily
3. We have learned to welcome a variety of initiatives, not necessarily needing participation of everyone or to be “large scale”.
4. Churches that have already successfully gone through major changes leading to renewal or radical change have experiences which can help others.
5. There is a high degree of interest and commitment to facing the future in truth and hope.

v. WHAT GOD IS CALLING US TO DO

A. Spiritual Renewal

Goal: *Transform our Presbytery culture so that our common life and ministry embodies our vision of “living in community with one another as diverse peoples unified in and through Jesus Christ, striving always to increase both the diversity of our membership and the strength of our community.”* (from the Mission/Vision Statement)

Action Steps:

1. Establish, implement, and practice norms for Presbytery meetings to govern our business, our process, and our conduct toward one another. Process:
 - a. Initial “open space Presbytery meeting” to discuss norms
 - b. Task force of General Council drafts norms based on discussion
 - c. Draft presented to next General Council meeting; approved at next Presbytery meeting; implemented at following meeting.

Responsibility: General Council

2. Create ongoing opportunities for building community within the Presbytery.
 - a. Facilitate pulpit/choir exchanges and congregational partnerships.
 - b. Facilitate Presbytery attendance at ordinations/installations through attention to scheduling and adequate advance notice.
 - c. Develop opportunities for fun and fellowship in presbytery (expand and take greater ownership over Softball League, etc.).

Responsibility: General Council

3. Create ongoing opportunities for shared theological reflection.
 - a. Establish a Theological Reflection Group with open membership, covenant of conduct, and Convener and Vice-Convener (who succeeds Convener) nominated annually by General Council.
 - (1) Meets once a month in different locations around the Presbytery for no more than 90 minute
 - (2) Agenda revolves around annual theological theme chosen by General Council at its May meeting
 - b. Hold “Open Conversations” on mornings before Tuesday Presbytery meetings on theological, ethical, or denominational issues of common concern.
 - (1) Meetings are convened and facilitated by Moderator.
 - (2) Agenda stands alone from meeting to meeting and is chosen by Moderator in consultation with General Council.
 - c. Include speakers at Presbytery meetings for common reflection and growth
 - d. Reduce time for committee reports at Presbytery.
4. Develop common resources for worship, study, and prayer.
 - a. Create/select a common Bible Study for Sessions, entities, etc.
 - b. Create online book and resource reviews on PNYC website
 - c. Create common liturgies for use by congregations and at Presbytery gatherings.

Responsibility: General Council

B. Strengthen Congregations

Goal: *“Discern and develop the most faithful strategies for the mission of the PCUSA in New York City and lead their implementation.”* (from the Mission/Vision Statement). *Give practical assistance and support to congregations for discerning, articulating, embracing, and expanding their mission for Christ in New York City in the 21st Century.*

Action Steps:

1. Conduct comprehensive mission survey for neighborhoods that seem particularly conducive to new church development or congregational re-development.
 - a.. Survey to be completed within 12 months of strategic plan’s adoption.
 - b. Survey to be parallel effort (not sequential) to following action steps.
2. Expand membership of CM&N and assign the following action steps as its priorities for the next 3-5 years. (see note below for collaboration on pilot project).
3. In collaboration with other entities develop a comprehensive self-assessment tool for helping congregations determine what their needs and strengths are in conducting their ministry.*

* see appendix I

4. In collaboration with other entities, develop a resource network from within the Presbytery to consult with congregations on various aspects of ministry (worship, evangelism, funds development, mission/vision discernment, strategic planning, etc.).
5. Recruit and train 12-15 facilitators to assist with self-assessments.
6. Recruit a pilot group of 12-15 Sessions to participate in the initial program.
 - a. Sessions, working with facilitator, complete self-assessments.
 - b. Session representatives (pastor & clerk participation required) meet as a cohort in retreat setting for shared evaluation.
 - c. Organize and implement comprehensive program of follow-up and follow-through to help congregations address identified needs.
 - d. One year into follow-up/follow-through process, conduct thorough evaluation with all participants.
7. Assuming pilot experience is successful, open process up to Presbytery
 - a.. Recruit additional participants for resource network to handle increased need.
 - b. Publicize “success stories” from pilot group widely (Presbytery Day, meetings, website, newsletter, solicit re-development awards, etc.)
 - c. Replicate process across Presbytery by inviting any congregation to participate.
 - d. With at least one year’s advance notice, require process as part of mission review, as part of applying for funding from Presbytery, and as part of making property decisions.
8. Within three years of completing mission survey, identify pilot congregations willing to embrace alternative models of congregational ministry.
 - a. “Parish partnership” – this would involve a cluster of congregations served by an ordained pastor and a group of commissioned lay pastors that would collaborate through shared mission and ministry.
 - b. “Entrepreneurial ministry” - this would involve one or more congregations who would sell their property, invest the proceeds in an endowment, and draw funds from that endowment each year to support its mission and ministry (space rental, personnel, administration, program, benevolences, etc.)
 - c. Other models appropriate to urban 21st century context
 - d. Details on these and other models to be developed by CM&N.
9. Encourage “linkage” among congregations of difference as a means of learning and sharing experiences that would lower the barriers of mistrust and distance and encourage openness, mutual sharing, and networking as partners in ministry.

Responsibility: Congregational Ministry & Nurture (Expanded)

For Pilot Project: Task Force made up of CMN, COM, CWSW, BOT, CASS

See Appendix Two, “A Frame for Helping Congregations”

C. Nourish Leadership*

Goal: *“To guide, support, and supervise our sessions, inquirers, and candidates for ordination, Commissioned Lay Pastors, Certified Christian Educators, and Ministers of Word and Sacrament in accomplishing effective ministry.”* (from the Mission/Vision Statement) *To create and maintain a more informed, cooperative, and flexible leadership that will help to strengthen congregations, expand public witness, build spiritual strength, restore commitment to connectionalism, and increase transparency and trust across the Presbytery*

Action Steps

1. For Elders and Laity

- a. Expand the Committee on Preparation for Lay Ministry to include leadership development for elders, laity and lay pastors. In addition to its current work, it would:
 - (1) Offer opportunities at Presbytery meetings for leadership development through teaching about scripture, Reformed theology, polity, stewardship, strategies for change, and culture
 - (2) Create ongoing mentoring, coaching groups, and support programs for LPs
 - (3) Working with COM, commission mentored lay pastors to a congregation for regular preaching and teaching assignments.
- b. Increase elder training to four times a year
Responsibility: Committee on Preparation for Lay Ministry
- c. Build leadership training for Clerks of Session
Responsibility: Stated Clerk

2. For Clergy

- a. Build an ongoing collegium for pastors dedicated to reflection, education, spiritual renewal, leadership development, and sharing.
- b. Create ongoing continuing education opportunities for pastors
- c. Create ways for clergy to gather for community building, collegial learning, and relaxation.
- d. Develop a Presbytery-wide strategy for recommending parish associates to sites where they can be most useful.
- e. Utilize technology to connect pastors to seminary public education programs and other resources
- f. With the help of the caucuses, identify and address the challenges of bringing pastors of particular racial or ethnic identity to congregations in the Presbytery
- g. Promote adequate compensation and benefits for all pastors
- h. Encourage the re-institution of the Synod-wide COM/CPM workshop
- i. Train moderators of sessions in churches without pastors in ways to support church renewal

Responsibility: COM

* see appendix II

3. For Candidates

- a. With COM, explore greater use of our candidates in mentored situations in congregations
- b. Train CPM in particular issues of Ministers from Other Denominations

Responsibility: CPM

See Also Appendix I, Leadership Suggestions

D. Make a Public Witness

Goal: *“Identify, resist, and contend with both church and secular powers that separate, exclude, or dehumanize people.”* (from the Mission/Vision Statement). *For the Presbytery and all its congregations to be engaged in mission, caring for the people of the city, the nation and the world and working to change structures of injustice at home and abroad.*

Action Steps:

1. Give priority attention over a period of two years to one critical social justice issue through an education/action campaign throughout the Presbytery: provide materials and programs, including borough-based or for other smaller groupings.
Responsibility: CWSW
2. Develop and publicize justice networks to link congregations and individuals working on particular issues.
Responsibility: CWSW in consultation with CM&N
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive media/PR plan: press releases, interview-positioning, etc. This would include media training for key spokespeople (EP, the Stated Clerk, the Moderator, etc.) and briefings for local media who need to know who we are, what we do, why we do it.
Responsibility: CWSW/General Council/Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk
4. Communicate outreach opportunities using the PNYC web site, in the newsletter, in classes before Presbytery meetings, in Presbytery Day workshops.
Responsibility: CWSW, with other entities as appropriate.

E. Stewardship

Goal: *“To cultivate creative and responsible stewardship of the human and financial resources for ministry entrusted to the Presbytery of New York City, and to seek new models and methods that help ensure the most faithful witness to Christ across the city.”* (from the Mission/Vision Statement) *To embody biblical values in our use of resources of wealth and property, placing mission before comfort, familiarity, and prestige.*

Action Steps:

1. Regularly explore our Presbyterian understanding of the collective nature of our resources and our connectional relationship in human and financial terms.

2. Strengthen congregations' stewardship by training their leaders in ways to maximize giving potential, hold regular stewardship campaigns, use annual budgets, and monitor giving. Encourage use of Church Financial Campaign Services.
3. Help congregations understand and utilize their physical facilities as resources for mission rather than objects of it.
4. Direct presbytery resources to sites of clear mission potential
5. Recruit from among the constituencies of Presbytery and related agencies and institutions, professional personnel willing to contribute service on a pro bono basis to congregations
6. Develop and implement grantmaking and fundraising strategies to support mission within the Presbytery of New York City and beyond, following training from appropriate professional organizations.
7. Encourage linkage options between diverse congregations
8. Explore the creation of a Presbytery Development Corporation to facilitate, guide, and support congregations which are exploring different building options, and to function as the primary corporate entity to broker funding and construction.
9. Align Presbytery budget with its vision and strategic plans.
10. Revisit current policy on mission funding/financing from Presbytery portfolio, to determine its adequacy for budgeting to meet the challenges of this new vision.

**Responsibility: CASS, Board of Trustees, CMN, Property
Manager.**

VI. Conclusion: Staffing, Funding and Sequencing

To change the culture of a Presbytery in order to bolster leadership, encourage self-assessment, envision new ideas, and build up the body of Christ is a visionary undertaking. To do all that we have imagined and planned will take resources of time, money, staff, and volunteers.

A. Staffing:

1. Increase Congregational Ministry position to full-time and redirect to "Frame" pilot project
2. Increase CPM/CPLP position to fulltime and include leadership development
3. Increase Witness position to fulltime and add media/marketing
4. Hire an Associate for Finance (in 9/07) with technology expertise and stewardship perspective.

Cost: (at current salaries and at 2006 dollars) \$250,000 per year (\$50,000 each for line) plus \$50,000 for administrative expenses.

B. Sequencing:

Year One:

1. General Council begins work on Spiritual Renewal
 - a. Norms meeting held
 - b. Two speakers for Presbytery
2. Personnel Committee rewrites job descriptions. By end of first year, search committees in place
3. Theological Reflection group organized, begins work
4. Standing Rules Committee rewrites CPLP mandate and CMN mandate and membership

5. CMN (with paid consultant) develops self-assessment tool and pilot project, starts pilot project
6. COM works on Leadership Development projects
 - (a) Designs 'collegium of learning'
 - (b) 4 gatherings of pastors
7. CWSW picks one issue

Year Two

1. Spiritual Renewal Continues
2. Search committees recommend new hires
3. COM work on leader development
4. Pilot project working
5. New staff hired

Year Three

1. Pilot project examined for use by whole Presbytery
2. Pastor collegium in place
3. New ways to recruit pastors in place
4. New endeavors started
5. Rework Standing Rules if necessary

Year Four

Continue plan

Year Five

Evaluation

VII. Appendices:

A. Appendix 1: A Frame for Helping Congregations Plan for the Future

Introduction:

We have the expectation of mutuality, compassion and competence in the relationship between the Presbytery and its congregations as we seek to move together toward a more vital future.

Helping congregations develop a realistic appraisal of their ministry and understand what they need in order to grow in their capacity for outreach is an important first step toward a healthier mutual ministry. Additionally, this helps everyone identify those congregations ready to partner with that structure in more creative and effective expressions of ministry.

There are at least four categories of congregations, each requiring a different strategy or intervention (relationship) by the Presbytery to assist them in moving toward more effective ministry. These four categories provide a flexible framework for partnership and for establishing priorities for the use of resources by the Presbytery regional body in its relationship to congregations. .

Categories of Congregational Circumstance – Descriptions and Needs:

1. **High Performance Congregations:** These are congregations of almost any size which exhibit innovation and creativity. They are open to experimentation and thoughtful change. They deal effectively with difference and have a healthy view of conflict. They have an ability to engage cultural trends and respond to emerging issues. They continually seek new ways to respond to both the congregation's and the community's needs. They have the financial and leadership resources needed to move into the future with vitality. They have a significant identity in the larger community and they attract a steady flow of visitors to their primary worship celebration. They are open to diversity as it exhibits itself in the surrounding community. There is a high value placed on quality in all that they do. These congregations have learned a great deal about what works. Some of what they have learned is important for other congregations to know about. They have something to teach others and may need support in finding the appropriate setting in which to share their story.

Needs:

- a. To share stories in a way which provides accessible models, and helps others see how to move from a level 3 or 2 to a level 2 or 1.
- b. To be challenged and supported to further growth.

Responsibility: CMN, CWSW

2. **Aspiring and Ready:** These congregations have real potential to expand ministry outreach and they have the vision and the organizational strength to attract new constituents. They are financially stable, but have not yet reached their giving potential. Their leadership core is open to new possibilities and willing to work to realize them. The minister is committed to remain at least five years to assist in moving the congregation forward. The program of ministry has not evolved to

support the congregation's aspirations and they are uneasy about the changes that must take place in order to enact their vision and they are not certain they can manage the conflict that often results from making needed change.

Needs:

- a. These congregations often need third party expertise, training, guidance and coaching to assist them in moving forward.
- b. Minister to remain at least five years.

Responsibility: CMN, CSSW, CASS

3. **Potential in Need of a Dream:** These congregations are often unaware of their potential and exhibit a predisposition for the status quo. They are resistant to change and anchored in the past. They are often either conflicted or conflict adverse. They are having difficulty meeting financial obligations. They have initiated few if any new programs in the past three years and the programs they offer are targeted to current members rather than potential new constituents. Community demographics suggest the congregation has the potential to reach new people but to do so will require a shift in the culture of the congregation.

Needs:

- a. These congregations may benefit from a process of theological reflection, visioning and training to broaden their sense of purpose.
- b. The leadership may need coaching in mapping a plan to effect changes in the congregation's behaviors.

Responsibility: COM, Board of Trustees

4. **Limited and Maintaining:** These congregations usually profile as static or in a long-standing pattern of decline with less than fifty in worship. The majority of active members are fifty years of age or older. The church has few children or youth and most of the current members travel to the church from locations outside the community where the church is located. They often have a less than full-time minister, who may also reside outside the community. The priority for many of these congregations is maintenance of the status quo and maintenance of the facility, which becomes more draining with each passing year, with fewer people to care for the work of upkeep. There is a limited pool of leaders for the programs of the church and insufficient numbers of active members to populate the traditional programs. These congregations are often in static or declining communities, or in communities where a racial or cultural transition has taken place and passed them by. The Presbytery in most cases cannot afford to prop up these institutions. After careful assessment and self-study by the congregation in partnership with the denominational body, they may consider staying as they are for as long as they can, discontinuing and selling the facility, merging with another nearby congregation, or closing and developing a totally new congregation designed to attract a new group of constituents. By selecting a limited number of these congregations for study, the Presbytery may learn new ways to create options for mission.

Needs:

- a. Maintenance of the status quo and maintenance of the facility, which becomes more draining with each passing year, with fewer people to care for the work of upkeep
- b. Need to decide whether to stay as they are for as long as they can, discontinue and sell the facility, merge with another nearby

congregation, or close and develop a totally new congregation designed to attract a new group of constituents.

Responsibility: COM, CMN, Board of Trustees

Focus for the Presbytery:

The most critical focus of opportunity for the Presbytery will be with those congregations who are aspiring and ready and with those who have potential but lack vision. Most of our missional resources will be committed to these congregations. The types and source of supportive functions we will provide include:

- 1. Insuring competent leadership with at least a five year commitment - COM
- 2. Assessment of facilities to accommodate expanded programs.- Trustees
- 3. Assistance in securing additional staff at this critical time. - COM
- 4. Provision for leadership training and coaching for laity and clergy – COM, CMN, CPLP.
- 5. Funding of experimental programs including enhanced worship and outreach – CMN, CWSW.

Additionally, the Presbytery has the responsibility to establish new congregations. Testing feasibility, developing a strategic plan, assembling needed resources and providing for the leadership required for responsibilities of Presbytery, working collaboratively across several entities.

Responsibility: General Council

B. Appendix 2: Suggestions for Nourishing Leadership

For Pastors and Other Clergy

1. Request denominational and non-denominational seminaries to help develop a data bank on pastoral candidates with evidence of visionary and entrepreneurial leadership ability and which would meet the pastoral leadership needs of the churches of PNYC
2. Link this resource to COM and CPM, encouraging them to develop a Presbytery-wide Assessment Plan
3. In consultation with seminaries and other related educational institutions, develop a broadly based syllabus to meet the needs of the Presbytery and its clergy, including design for the continuing education for all clergy members.
4. Create tools for understanding of the realities of the 21st century church and needed analysis, urban ministry skills, and strategies for change
5. Encourage use of sabbaticals by providing assistance for same.

This “frame” was the original work of Dr. John Janka, which has been edited for use by the Presbytery.