

Preface

The process to write this Mission Study began twelve months ago with the formation of the Mission Study Committee (MSC). A wider circle of people joined the discernment in November 1998 when over fifty of our leaders attended a workshop that was led by Dr. Norman Shawchuck. Early in 1999, the congregation became involved through a survey from the Hartford Seminary. (The data gathered from these two processes will be filed with the Mission Study in the office or library.) Then the MSC drafted the statement of purpose (see next page) and created four mission groups to explore the ramifications of this vision. These sub-committees worked intensely for over two months to apply the statement of purpose to our spiritual life, relationships and communication, operations, and outreach and missions. Their combined efforts were edited into this unified document that is our Mission Study. Throughout the last year, we have been led, equipped, and sustained by God. May we follow His call to us in this Mission Study.

Mission Study Committee

Steve Chuck (chair)	Bob Norcross
Margaret Barton-Burke	Dick Pew
Chris John	Wendy Williams
Dottie Mark	H. G. Wardlaw, Jr.

Spiritual Mission Group

Steve Chuck (chair)
Mike Bundy
Dorothy Chappell
Kevin Ford
Debbie MacDonald
Karen Schnorr
Sandy Siciliano
Jim Thistlethwaite

Operational Mission Group

Bob Norcross (chair)
Dick Pew (chair)
Thom Burke
Sue Denison
Lucy O'Mara
Marc Sherrod
Dottie Smith
H. G. Wardlaw, Jr.

Relational Mission Group

Margaret Barton-Burke (chair)
Wendy Williams (chair)
Kevin Campbell
June Chamberlain
Patrick Davis
Sharon John
Eric Lanzendorf
Richard MacDonald
Sue Pew
Scott Rasmussen
Carolyn Straub
Mary Ann Ziegler
H. G. Wardlaw, Jr.

Outward Focus Mission Group

Chris John (chair)
Dottie Mark (chair)
Ruth Batchelder
George Hinman
Kristen Mark
Rob Mark
Allison May
Harold May
Jean Scholtens
Diane Wright

Statement of Purpose

Newton Presbyterian Church

By God's grace and through the Holy Spirit, we will grow as disciples of Jesus Christ in one body through scripture, prayer, worship, and service and express the gospel locally and around the world.

This statement declares our vision of how God is calling us to live as individuals and as a church. It is to reflect and guide our individual, daily decisions and the corporate systems of our fellowship. It is, therefore, also a theological statement that draws upon our rich heritage in the Reformed and evangelical traditions and calls us to renewed fellowship with Christ under the authority of His written word.

The major theological themes embodied in this statement follow below.

God's grace is the starting point for us as individuals and as a church; without the grace of God, we are hopelessly lost in sin and cannot follow Jesus Christ as disciples. We bring nothing to God but idolatrous and sin-stained souls. But God in His grace justifies us, calls us to faith in Jesus Christ, binds us together in His body, renews us according to His image, and leads us in mission into the world.

It is **through the Holy Spirit** that God causes us to grow in Christ. We worship and acknowledge the divine authority and power of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is present with us, drawing us through faith into deeper fellowship with Christ. The Holy Spirit is present with us in our worship, through the preaching and in our hearing of the word, and in the sacraments. He is with us in our fellowship together, in our family life, in our private devotions, and throughout the day. God's Spirit challenges, transforms, and enables us. By His hand, the purposes of God are accomplished in our lives and in the lives of others.

God calls us to a living faith in which the focus of our lives is to **grow as disciples of Jesus Christ**. Being baptized and joining the church is not the end; it is the beginning, for in Christ we discover not only new life but also a new way of life. In growing as disciples, we will love God more fully and will follow the commandments of Jesus more obediently. God's enveloping love inspires within us responses of love and gratitude that draw us into a growing dependence upon God and greater obedience to the teachings of Jesus. A full discussion of this topic is in "Spiritual Life."

Spiritual growth is to be the aim of each individual member of NPC. However, our purpose also is to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ **in one body**. We are the church together. Indeed, as Christians we are called to reconciled, loving relationships with

each other because we have been reconciled with God. We have the privilege of sharing one another's burdens and the responsibility to encourage one another in love. We will care about the faith and welfare of others as much as we care for ourselves. We will speak with one another in love. We are united with each other and other Christians in the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) and the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. These issues are examined in "Relationships and Communication."

How will we grow as disciples of Jesus Christ? Although God will use many experiences in our lives to accomplish His will in us, we will seek to grow in Christ through **scripture, prayer, worship, and service**. We will study and apply the Bible to our lives regularly as individuals and together as a church. We will meet God in prayer, seeking Him individually each day and corporately when we gather together as a church family. We will worship together regularly as a church; likewise, the very character of our individual lives will be offered daily as acts of worship to God. We will serve God and one another in the church with the various gifts God has given to us including our time, money, and abilities. Indeed, each member of Newton Presbyterian Church should respond to seven specific callings that can foster our discipleship. These themes are amplified in "Spiritual Life" and "Operations."

Finally, we will endeavor **to express the gospel locally and around the world**. We take seriously the Great Commission in which Christ commands us to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Giving Christ priority in every sphere of our lives, we will live the gospel. We will manifest the kingdom of God and introduce others to Jesus Christ through our words and deeds. We will take a personal and active role in ministry and missions. These issues are discussed in "Outreach and Missions."

Ultimately, our statement of purpose is a prayer for God's will to be done among us and in the world through us. May God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be glorified.

Spiritual Life

By God's grace and through the Holy Spirit, we will grow as disciples of Jesus Christ in one body through scripture, prayer, worship, and service and express the gospel locally and around the world.

At Newton Presbyterian Church (NPC), our hope is for each person to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Our congregation encompasses three groups of people: visitors (including persons who are exploring faith and Christians looking for a church), regular participants who are not members, and members. As a church, we value each of these three groups of people, and we encourage each person to grow in their faith.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GROW AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST?

To grow as a disciple means to deepen our loving relationship with Jesus Christ and each other and to follow His commandments more obediently. As Jesus said in John 14:23:

“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

Thus, growth as a Christian emphasizes relationship and obedience to Jesus, both of which are manifest in personal and corporate dimensions. Each person is invited to a personal relationship with God; each person is called to obey God's commandments. This response of faith is not limited to the individual, however, for we are one body. We are called to loving relationships with one another and to obey God as a body. We gather on Sundays to worship God *together* and to be strengthened as one community of believers. Whether gathered or scattered, we are always the church.

As we grow as disciples, God will produce in us love and obedience. He will lead us to live our lives as expressions of love for God and love for people just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 22:37-40:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Furthermore, Jesus tells us in John 13:34-35 that love is an identifying mark of His disciples. May it so clearly mark us! Towards that end, we will demonstrate obedient love in all that we do, in our relationships with one another, our service to the church, our witness and ministry to the community and world, and in our stewardship of the gifts God has given us. With every act of obedience, we joyfully respond to the grace and love of our savior Jesus Christ.

WHAT ARE MEMBERS CALLED TO DO TO PROMOTE THEIR GROWTH AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS?

In Jesus Christ, God freely gives us grace, which we do not merit. Then He calls us to lead lives transformed by that grace, lives that reflect the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, lives that heed the call of Jesus: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself

and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). We are called to strive toward a more sanctified life individually and as a church realizing that we will fall short because of our sinfulness. Thus, grace calls us to obedience, and when we sin and are disobedient, grace restores us. In light of God’s grace and invitation to obedience, all members of NPC are called to:

1. ***Regular worship with the congregation and active participation in the life of the body***
Every member, including those who tirelessly serve the church as a part of the Sunday school program, is encouraged to worship with the congregation regularly for their spiritual nurture and to strengthen relationships with the congregation.
2. ***Responsible stewardship of time, talents, and money in service to the church***
Each member should seek ways to demonstrate the gospel and to serve the church using their unique, God-given gifts.
3. ***Growth in one’s knowledge of God through regular participation in adult education***
4. ***Regular, personal devotions with the goal of meeting God daily***
Members should be encouraged and taught how to have devotions through books in the NPC library, Scripture Union booklets, adult education classes, testimonies, pastoral advice, and session-led programs.
5. ***Prayer for each other, our community, and our world both as individuals and as one body***
A culture of prayer should be developed further at NPC through corporate prayer in both worship services, adult education courses on prayer, small groups, seasonal or short-term prayer groups (e.g., during Lent), and whenever members gather together.
6. ***Partnership with other members of NPC for encouragement, prayer, support, and sharing in a small group***
Small groups are defined and discussed on the next page.
7. ***Integration of faith into all of one’s life***
Faith touches all aspects of our lives at all times. Faith that is alive cannot be compartmentalized, saved for Sundays only, or given summers off. Faith that is integrated into one’s life bears fruit; love for Jesus and others will be evident in one’s words, actions, and activities. This call to apply one’s faith specifically includes the call to relate to one another with love (as discussed in “Relationships and Communication”) and the call to express the gospel to others (as discussed in “Outreach and Missions”). As C. S. Lewis said, “If Jesus is not lord of all, he is not lord at all.”

These seven callings are not legalistic requirements; rather, they are benefits of membership at NPC that will work together to help us grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

A commitment to membership in NPC includes a commitment to respond faithfully to each of these seven callings.

WHAT PROGRAMS AT NPC CAN BE CHANGED TO FACILITATE OUR GROWTH IN DISCIPLESHIP?

Small groups

Small groups are an integral rather than an adjunct part of the plan at NPC to foster discipleship. We define small groups as having four goals:

1. Spiritual nurture,
2. Community (supportive relationships among the group),
3. Worship and prayer together, and
4. Mission (service to the church or ministry to people outside NPC).

The associate pastor will oversee a comprehensive program of small groups and provide training and nurture to the leaders of these groups. Until an associate pastor is called, we recommend that: 1) persons at NPC who are involved in campus ministry develop and lead training sessions for current and future leaders of small groups, 2) at least one member of Session be responsible for the program of small groups, and 3) groups be created beginning in the fall of 1999 to accommodate all members who request to participate in a new group.

Christian education for adults

Currently offered on Sunday mornings, Christian education for adults also plays a central role in helping us grow as disciples. At present, relatively few members attend adult education classes. All members will be encouraged to participate in adult education by emphasizing its importance from the pulpit, improving the range and quality of classes, and changing the schedule for Sunday mornings to protect time for classes. Furthermore, all leaders—including pastors, staff, and active elders—shall set a positive example by their own active participation in classes.

A varied curriculum should be established that will meet many different needs and interests in an organized manner. The curriculum should be set up and published well in advance of the start of classes. In the place of the current new members' class, we recommend two courses: the first to explore what it means to be a Christian, and the second to prepare Christians for membership in NPC. All prospective members should take both courses regardless of their Christian experience, and people are free to take the first course without pursuing the second. The course on preparation for membership at NPC should include discussions on each of the seven callings for members. In addition to these introductory courses, at least one class should always be offered in each of the following three areas: 1) studies on specific books in the Bible, 2) theological studies on specific topics or books written by Christian authors, and 3) applications of faith to specific aspects of our lives (e.g., marriage and family). Teachers can be drawn from the congregation, staff, and nearby colleges and seminaries.

The associate pastor will draw up a challenging curriculum, schedule classes, and arrange for teachers along with the committee on adult education. This committee should include a member of the session. Until an associate pastor is called, we recommend that a member of the session work with other members of the congregation to develop and schedule a varied curriculum that can be implemented beginning in the fall of 1999.

Christian education for children and youth

Christian education for children through high school is essential to raising young disciples of Jesus Christ. Based on the experience of members of the spiritual mission group who work with college students, the majority of kids raised as Christians do not own their faith nor pursue faith in college. Youth in college often miss their youth group and friends but not church or faith. At NPC, the program for the seventh through twelfth grades has been less consistent than the program for the primary grades. Above all, we recognize that our youth are learning what it means to be a disciple of Christ by what they see in the broader adult congregation. The Hartford Seminary survey indicated that many of us feel that we inadequately model the faith. Given this perspective, we are challenged all the more to live circumspect and dedicated lives of faith.

Christian education for youth can be improved by making changes that will foster an active response to the call to faith.

1. As a congregation, we must be living models of faith for our children by growing as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our youth will benefit when their families and congregation actively struggle with the meaning and application of faith.
2. Participating in missions alongside other youth and adults can make faith more real to our children. We need to preach and act on a gospel that is not safe, comfortable, or shaped to fit our needs; rather, we need to live the gospel of Jesus Christ, which calls all of us to the joyous service of God and other people. We call upon the Outreach and Missions Committee (see "Outreach and Missions") to propose a short-term mission within driving distance that our families can do together within the next year.
3. In preparation for active membership, children will participate in programs patterned after the two courses offered to adults who wish to become members. First, children should be taught the basics of Christian faith and sound theology as articulated in the Apostle's Creed and Shorter Catechism. This should include the nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We recommend that the curriculum for children in the elementary grades be designed to prepare them for this study of the Apostle's Creed and the Shorter Catechism. Second, children should be given the opportunity to confirm their membership through confirmation classes. The Christian education committee and Sunday school board will determine the curriculum and grade levels for these two types of annual courses. Children should be given the opportunity to profess and then

confirm their faith without pressure. These changes are recommended to begin during the 1999 school year.

4. We need to provide opportunities for our youth to wrestle with the meaning of their faith. Our youth should be challenged by the curriculum to ask and reflect on difficult questions. Our goal should be for the youth to own and act on their faith and commitments. The director(s) of youth ministries, Sunday school board, and Christian education committee together are responsible for fostering this climate.
5. We need to increase the interactions of our youth with the rest of the congregation. This relationship benefits the church and provides youth the experience of adult Christian community. For example, our teenagers can visit elderly members or shut-ins. The responsibility to integrate youth into our community belongs to all members and staff of NPC.
6. Individual youth should be paired with spiritually mature adults who can serve as mentors. This program can be done immediately with little cost and great mutual benefit. We recommend that the director(s) of youth ministries match any unpaired youth with an adult member by December each year.
7. Each high school student in their sophomore or junior years should be encouraged to attend a one-week camp administered by Young Life. Experiences at these camps have solidified the faith of many of our adult members. We recommend that NPC reestablish its ties and support of Young Life here in New England. Furthermore, we ask the session to consider making funds available to students who cannot afford to attend a camp by Young Life. In the event that nearby Young Life camps are unable to accommodate our youth, we recommend that the director(s) of youth ministries and Christian education committee recommend Young Life camps that are further away or other camps that similarly build the foundations of faith.

Schedule for Sunday mornings

The schedule for Sunday mornings should facilitate our spiritual growth together. The schedule for Sunday morning worship and education was a topic of much discussion in the Spiritual Mission Group and the Mission Study Committee. We considered a wide range of plans including adopting a single worship service, moving the 8:30 a.m. service to 9:30 a.m., and the plan we are recommending. We have concluded that this issue is complex, elicits strong feelings, and needs to be explored further with input from the congregation.

Until this matter is examined thoroughly (via a process that we outline below), we recommend making a few minor changes to the schedule. Our primary goals now are to protect the time for adult education and to foster healthy relationships among members of one body. We recommend starting with the following revisions to the current schedule in the fall of 1999:

- 8:30-9:30 a.m. Contemporary worship service which ends promptly at 9:30 a.m.
- 9:45-10:45 a.m. Adult education (no meetings or practices during this time)
- 10:45-11:15 a.m. Coffee time and choir practice (children to be picked up at 10:45)
- 11:15-12:15 p.m. Traditional worship service which ends promptly at 12:15 p.m.

It is our aim for members who attend different worship services to interact during the times for adult education and coffee.

We recommend that the worship services be reevaluated by a session-designated task force which will work with a consultant (see “Relationships and Communication”) and the congregation. A decision on whether to have one or more worship services and the schedule for Sunday mornings *must* be made prior to the installation of the next pastor to avoid saddling the new pastor with these charged issues.

HOW CAN OUR PASTOR AND ACTIVE ELDERS ENCOURAGE US IN OUR CHRISTIAN GROWTH?

The pastor and active elders serve as spiritual leaders for the congregation. This leadership should be demonstrated in their character, actions, and teaching. As leaders, the pastor and active elders should respond to each of the seven callings.

Led by the Holy Spirit, the pastor also is responsible for teaching the congregation in part through expository preaching that elucidates and applies Biblical texts calling us to a closer relationship and obedience to Jesus Christ (see also “Operations”). However, it is the congregation—not the pastor—that is responsible for its corporate obedience to God. For its part, the congregation contributes to its spiritual growth through faithful response to the seven callings.

HOW ARE WE CALLED TO VIEW MEMBERSHIP AT NEWTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH?

Faith and membership are dynamic, and we are called to continual growth rather than complacency. Therefore, we recommend an annual process of reaffirmation of faith and commitment to NPC incorporating a coordinated program and possibly concluding with a ceremony. The program might entail a series of sermons, adult education, questions for discussion in small groups, and individual reflection to encourage all members to thoughtfully consider the meaning of their faith and membership at NPC. The ceremony may be held during a common worship service (perhaps at Pentecost). We recommend that annual reaffirmation of our faith and commitment to NPC begin next year through a process developed by the active elders and pastor.

Relationships and Communication

*By God's grace and through the Holy Spirit, we will grow as disciples of Jesus Christ **in one body** through scripture, prayer, worship, and service and express the gospel locally and around the world.*

RELATIONSHIPS AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

People relate to one another in various ways. Our relationships reflect differing levels of knowledge of persons and differing levels of commitment. In general, we share the deepest commitment with people whom we know and love most such as our spouse, family members, or close friends.

The family offers a model of close, dynamic relationships. Within a family, members can share love, understanding, forgiveness, and encouragement. Family members often help each other and work together. Families, however, consist of individuals with unique, God-given hearts and minds and inevitably experience differences in opinion and conflicts. At these times families may find healthy ways to resolve their differences in light of their mutual love and commitment.

Of course, conflicts may also be dealt with in unhealthy ways. For example, members may ignore or avoid talking about conflict. They may yell, cry, and slam doors preventing discussion and thwarting resolution. Others may deal with anxiety or conflict by attempting to align other family members to their side. This behavior of complaining to a third party rather than the person(s) with whom we have a difference is called creating “triangles” or “triangling.” These three behavioral patterns are rarely productive and can wound relationships.

As a part of the body of Christ, our church is a family, and we often enjoy the closeness of this relationship. As a result of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, we often exhibit mutual caring, commitment, and love. Our healthy relational patterns are demonstrated best in times of crisis. When a person is ill, we surround them with caring, concern, and practical aid. At times, our lives demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These qualities are pleasing to God, rewarding for us, and make our congregation attractive to visitors.

We do not always live in such harmony, however, for our church family has argued and experienced conflict. As in physical families, disagreement among sisters and brothers in Christ is not in and of itself alarming. The Bible records disagreements among faithful Christians such as between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41) and during the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29). When differences arise, the Scriptures encourage us to actively seek reconciliation with one another (e.g., Matthew 5:23-24). When disagreements surface at NPC, however, our life together often is marked more by our sin than our love. In times of conflict, we can behave and communicate in ways that prevent resolution and hurt or alienate others. Surely these sinful patterns grieve God and keep us from experiencing the joy of living in right relationships with God and one another.

Damaging ways in which we have related to one another

- We have avoided acknowledging disagreement. We have felt intimidated or that it would be wrong to voice our concerns in a committee or with the leadership of the church. We have withheld our thoughts in a group meeting only to air them later in the parking lot, over the telephone, via email, or with other friends (that is, we create “triangles” as defined above).
- We have viewed disagreements as debates to be won or lost. To see our plans enacted we have been willing to subvert fair, open, and decorous processes. At other times, we do not fully understand the proper procedure. In either case, when personal agendas are foremost, distrust thrives, feelings are hurt, and relationships are damaged. The breach in relationships causes disunity and in some cases, loss of valued church members or staff.
- There is a pervasive lack of accountability at Newton Presbyterian Church that affects members and every level of leadership. Whether by neglect or willful disobedience, people often fail to follow through on the decisions of committees or assignments. This continuing pattern of behavior undermines the effectiveness of our church.
- Lay leaders have expressed that they feel vulnerable to criticism in their service to the church. They have expressed frustration with poor definition of tasks and roles and inadequate training in leadership skills.
- We show unwillingness to submit to authority whether it is to the session or the pastor. Furthermore there is a sense that NPC participates insufficiently in our presbytery, and we appear to isolate ourselves neglecting our link to the other churches.

Repenting from our Sins

All of us have at times responded to one another with sinful patterns rather than reconciliation. Each of us needs to acknowledge his or her own sin, ask for forgiveness from God and one another, and repent. Through the Holy Spirit, we must be reconciled with God and one another.

Submitting to the transforming power of God

We desire to become a healthy and whole congregation. We want to share in the abundant life that Christ gives and accept His invitation to experience the fresh winds of Spirit-filled renewal. We want to submit to the instructions of our Lord:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your

faith **goodness**; and to goodness, **knowledge**; and to knowledge, **self-control**; and to self-control, **perseverance**; and to perseverance, **godliness**; and to godliness, **brotherly kindness**; and to brotherly kindness, **love**. **For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:3-8, emphasis added).

In response we seek the following shifts in our congregational life (see also “Spiritual Life”):

From	To
merely joining and supporting the church	<i>being</i> the church wherever we are
needing to prove one's self	freedom to be one's self
a life grounded in fear	a life grounded in trust
worth based on achievement	worth based on God’s creation
counting ways we have been short-changed	counting our blessings
being defined by the culture	being defined by God

Recommendations

We recommend implementing three steps in the following order.

First, we will employ a consultant or consulting firm to assist us to:

1. identify the sources of damaging relational patterns,
2. break our historic reliance upon these patterns, and
3. develop healthy relational patterns for the future.

We recommend that the session form a search committee to hire this consultant or consulting firm. The session is asked to appoint Kevin Campbell, Chris John, and Thom Burke (elders who have served with the Mission Study Committee). These elders will select three persons from the congregation to join the committee. The three open positions on this committee will be publicized so that all interested people can request consideration. The consultant should be a specialist in behavioral interventions with individuals and churches who has a proven track record in improving church structure, function, and relationships. The task of the consultant will be to accomplish specific, measurable outcomes. This process should begin upon acceptance of the Mission Study by the session. We desire to select the consultant by October 1, 1999. Our aim is for Newton Presbyterian Church to demonstrate skills in relationships and communication that enable us to resolve conflicts in healthy ways.

Second, we will hold a corporate service of repentance. The nature of the service as well as the process of preparation is to be prayerfully discerned by the session. We would like to see the service held by October 31, 1999. We suggest that it focus on prayer, repentance, and renewal. It is our firm conviction that we will not be able to grow in faith, goodness, knowledge, self control, godliness, brotherly kindness, or love (2 Peter 1: 3-8) without confessing our past sins and extending and receiving forgiveness. We desire to move forward with a clean slate.

Third, we will develop and commit to a written Relational Covenant. Guided by this covenant, the members NPC will relate to one another in love. The Relational Covenant will encourage us to:

- Respect the worth and dignity of ourselves and others,
- Communicate with honesty,
- Live with integrity,
- Demonstrate accountability in all our dealings,
- Establish trust,
- Practice encouragement, and
- Provide empowerment.

These behaviors are grounded in the Bible, and accordingly, the covenant will contain appropriate biblical references. This covenant is to be written and approved by the end of May 2000 under the direction of the session. We recommend that the courses in leadership training (see “Operations”) and for new members (see “Spiritual Life”) include a discussion of this covenant. It is our aim that our adherence to the Relational Covenant will foster healthy relationships.

FAMILY LIFE AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Our church communicates information about our structure (who is in charge of what task) only in informal ways. Since people often do not know where to take questions, concerns, or suggestions, they can feel that their input is not welcome. As a result, people perceive that power is concentrated in the hands of only a few.

In the past several attempts have been made to clearly communicate information such as, who we are, where classes are, news, and changes in plans. These have included the Dayspring, bulletin announcements, bulletin board displays, posted minutes, mailings, and announcements before and during worship services. NPC, however, has failed to follow a consistent plan for communicating with its congregation, and frequently people must ask others for information.

As we try to share our gifts and abilities with one another, we have found it difficult to identify people with specific resources. The current directory is inadequate; we need to develop a list of current members and an inventory of their gifts (see “Operations”).

Thus, strengthening our communications will enhance our relationships inside and outside of NPC and facilitate our ministry (see “Outreach and Missions”).

Recommendations

We must respond faithfully to the call to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ (see “Spiritual Life”). We strongly recommend that each person at NPC strengthen their communion with God and one another in the following ways. We recommend that the session assign by October 1, 1999 a person or group to oversee the implementation of at least the following programs by June 2000.

- The monthly prayer guide should be printed again. We need to pray for one another, our programs, our leadership, and our world (see also “Spiritual Life”).
- We must develop a program to communicate with visitors. It takes courage to visit a church, and we should reach out to visitors while they are in our midst and acknowledge that step with a return call, visit, or letter (see also “Outreach and Missions”).
- NPC shall develop a web site. This online presence could facilitate communication with one another and reach out to people seeking a church.
- We recommend more opportunities for recreation and light-hearted fellowship such as the Ceilidh, weekly frisbee gatherings on Sunday afternoons, and church picnics and potluck dinners.
- We will develop an informational, tri-fold pamphlet entitled "Welcome to NPC" and place it in the pews, at all the entrances to the worship services, and in an information stand in the vestry. This pamphlet should include our history in brief, times and descriptions of our worship services, musical programs (i.e., choir, bell choirs, contemporary praise team, etc.), description of our outreach and missions, adult and youth education, and who's who in leadership.
- We will develop a new church directory of members and friends, indicating members with an asterisk. This directory also should describe the roles, phone numbers, email and street addresses of the staff, active elders, deacons, and committees of the session. It should also include all the current programs of the church with contact names, where and when they meet, and their function. This book will represent a subset of the time and talent database (see below and “Operations”).
- We will develop a time and talent database, which will track member’s interests, gifts, and willingness to serve in particular ways. This directory will be of great assistance when we look for leaders or help with specific projects. Our goal is that all of our spiritual gifts would be identified and fruitfully employed. This database will be updated yearly. A person or group assigned by the session will determine the process to create and maintain this database (see also “Operations”).

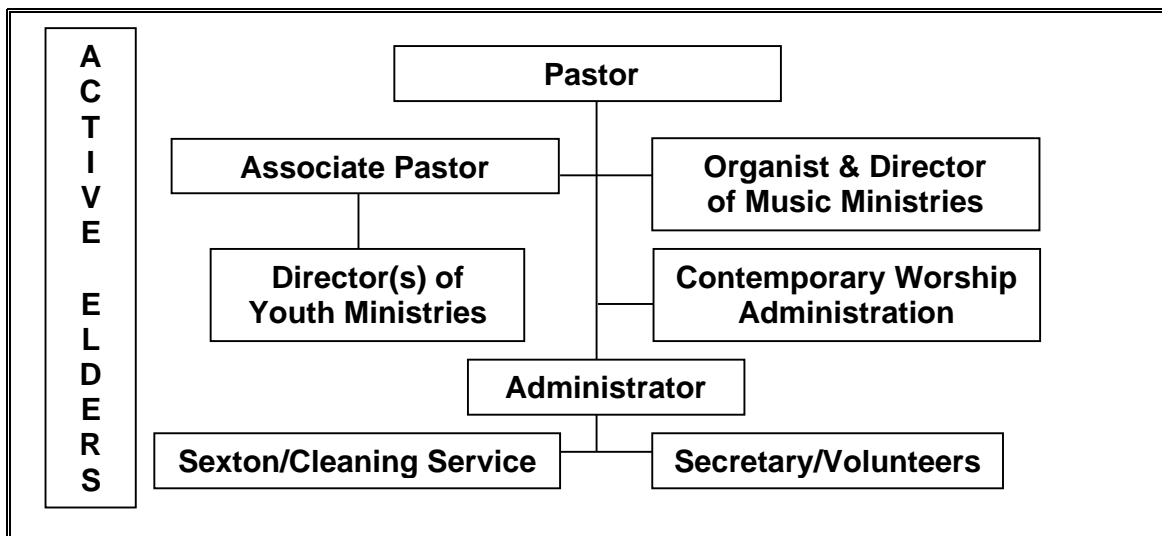
Operations

By God's grace and through the Holy Spirit, we will grow as disciples of Jesus Christ in one body through scripture, prayer, worship, and service and express the gospel locally and around the world.

The three aspects of service to the church and operations considered in this section are staffing, stewardship, and leadership training. Our recommendations in these areas respond to the congregational survey, prepare us for future growth, and facilitate a transition to a corporate church system. (A 'corporate church' is one with typically at least 350 worshippers, many diverse programs, and multiple staff headed by the pastor. See appendix D of *Discerning Your Congregation's Future* by R. M. Oswald and R. E. Friedrich, Jr., The Alban Institute, 1996.)

STAFFING

Established committees and numerous volunteers play vital roles in the operation of our church. However, the model below focuses on paid staff as they serve together with the active elders. We recommend that our staff meet regularly with an outside resource person to discuss any differences and strengthen their relationships and communication.



Pastor

The pastor will be a spiritual resource and visible leader who communicates a clear vision. Developing a broad-based, shared leadership, the pastor will empower and enable people in the congregation to carry out the work and worship of the church.

In consultation with the session, the pastor's primary responsibility is to plan worship services and preach the Word with careful attention to the spiritual needs of the congregation. Given the priority of a strong preaching ministry, at least one quarter of

the minister's time should be protected for sermon preparation and the ordering of worship.

The pastor will equip, oversee, and offer care to the leaders of the church. The pastor will help plan and moderate session meetings and keep the session focused on the congregation's articulated goals and objectives. The pastor provides for the teaching and training of elders and deacons and works with other congregational members in committees.

As head of staff, the pastor meets regularly with staff as a group and with individual staff members to coordinate, facilitate, and empower their work.

The pastor's care for the congregation will be expressed through participation in activities such as new members' classes, confirmation classes, baptismal preparation, weddings and funerals, and adult education. The pastor will visit persons in the congregation as needed to support the associate pastor and will provide for pre-marital, bereavement, and crisis counseling.

Associate Pastor

The associate pastor will oversee the spiritual development, discipleship, and ministry of members through small groups, Christian education for adult and youth (including all children), and mission activities. Towards this end, the associate pastor will empower the deacons, youth leader(s), and committees for Christian education of adults and children for their ministries.

The associate pastor will be responsible for a program to welcome and involve visitors. With the pastor and session, the associate pastor will prepare and lead new members' classes and facilitate the assimilation of new members into the life of the church.

The associate pastor will both visit with shut-ins personally and coordinate a program involving others in home and hospital visitation.

The associate pastor will participate in weekly staff meetings and attend monthly session meetings as a voting member.

The associate pastor will preach approximately once per month and lead one or both worship services as needed.

Church Administrator

We recommend hiring a full-time church administrator who will be responsible for the business operations of our church. This person will supervise the secretary, office volunteers, the sexton, and cleaning services. This administrator would manage the physical property, financial affairs and records, and scheduling.

Music Staff

We recommend that the positions for music staff be reevaluated by the same session-designated task force that will work with a consultant and the congregation to reevaluate the worship services (see “Spiritual Life”).

Organist and Director of Music Ministries

In addition to being the church organist, the director of music ministries will provide musical support for worship, church choirs, and special services. The director will participate in staff meetings, supervise the care of musical equipment, and purchase music.

Contemporary Worship Administration

We recommend creating one or more part-time positions in contemporary worship administration to provide leadership to the contemporary worship service. The total budget for all of these positions will be one-quarter to one-third of a single full-time position. This staff will assist the pastor in the arrangement of the elements of contemporary worship so that they are thematically integrated. This staff will be supervised and supported by the pastor, will participate in some meetings with other staff, and will oversee the maintenance of equipment and musical instruments.

Director(s) of Youth Ministries

The director(s) of youth ministries will oversee the junior and senior high school programs and will coordinate their efforts with the Sunday school programs.

Secretary

The secretary will run the office, process correspondence, maintain office records, prepare Sunday bulletins, coordinate office volunteers, help prepare minutes of meetings, maintain a database of members, schedule appointments, and distribute church communication (including the church newsletter).

Sexton and Cleaning Service

The sexton will perform limited maintenance, security, and setup or restoration of meeting spaces. The cleaning service is expected to keep our facilities clean.

STEWARDSHIP

We should use our resources in light of our commitment to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and express His gospel. The following points will guide the session as it exercises

its responsibility for stewardship through education, planning, and the implementation of a regular stewardship program.

Time and Money

1. Members and regular attendees should be given regular (probably annual) opportunities to fill out a time and talent inventory. This survey will allow participants to express interest in particular areas of service and ministry. With an associate pastor serving as a staff resource, a session committee will use these inventories to maintain a volunteer data bank. Time and talent inventories might be submitted outside of worship or be occasionally offered with pledge cards on a dedication Sunday as acts of devotion and commitment. These inventories should include new members so that they can become involved swiftly into the life and workings of our fellowship.
2. The session should regularly report on the financial status of the church, communicating to the congregation what money has been received and how it has been used in light of previously specified goals. This would be appropriately done either weekly in the bulletin and/or monthly in the newsletter.
3. We recommend the implementation of a pledging program. The session will propose an expanded budget identifying specific priorities that would be fulfilled should the pledging indicate sufficiently increased income. To emphasize the importance of pledging to our stewardship, the following suggestions can be incorporated into the pledging program:
 - Members may be called or visited to solicit pledges.
 - The financial challenge may be combined with the solicitation of time and talent inventories.
 - Specific Sundays may be set aside as dedication Sundays when all received pledges will be presented for dedication.
 - The session should prayerfully evaluate requests for unscheduled special offerings, being careful not to detract from regular pledging.
4. We should tap denominational resources such as the Presbyterian Foundation, which would manage at no cost the investment of church funds (as an endowment). Representatives from the Foundation could educate members about the possibility of wills and bequests to Newton Presbyterian Church.

Building

The care and use of the physical facilities of Newton Presbyterian Church is also an expression of our stewardship. Therefore, we recommend the following proposals.

1. The appearance and accessibility of the building to visitors is a major concern. The current parking area and lawn should be reorganized, upgraded, and made as

attractive as possible. Legible signs should be posted and kept up-to-date by the sexton. We should explore additional options for parking such as at Bigelow School. Either ushers or a hospitality committee should be assigned to welcome visitors and provide them with directions or maps to available parking. These greeters should tell visitors about the location of services and Sunday school classes in the building.

2. The session should designate a sufficient amount in the annual budget (e.g. \$15,000) for routine repairs and permit a committee to authorize these repairs.
3. We recommend expanding the first-floor office space to accommodate additional staff.
4. We need to maintain our building at a standard of which we can be proud. We should budget for anticipated and unanticipated maintenance costs when the building is used heavily by groups inside or outside NPC.

LEADERSHIP: A NEW LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

We recommend the establishment of a leadership training program. This program should equip the leadership of NPC, provide an in-depth understanding of the obligations and rewards of church leadership, and educate participants in the theological background necessary to serve knowledgeably in their respective positions. Such a course shall be in place by the time the next senior pastor is installed, and preparation should begin immediately upon completion of the Mission Study.

The program itself will be overseen by the Leadership Training Committee, which may draw upon resources within the staff and congregation. This committee will be appointed and overseen by the session. We suggest that former elders, deacons, or committee members be considered to serve on this committee and that recommendations from the current committee chairs be solicited.

We propose an annual course that will meet weekly for approximately six sessions beginning after the new officers are elected. The course will be open to anyone who wishes to attend, including individuals who may be interested in serving the church through leadership in the future. However, attendance will be required of elders, deacons, and committee members who are incoming, in their first year, or at the beginning of their second term of office. Staff members should attend initially and thereafter at three-year intervals.

The course should be fashioned so that people will *want* to attend rather than doing so out of mere obligation. The course will center on a leadership training handbook to be prepared by the Leadership Training Committee. The *Model Officer Manual* that was prepared by Dr. J. Keith Cook will serve as a reference. However, the course also will include other material as indicated below. The leadership training program should not be comprised solely of lectures. Instead, the course should involve hands-on exercises, role-playing, assigned reading, and multi-media material. The content of the course will cover the following topics:

1. A description of the schedules, policies, jobs, and responsibilities of each board and committee (one session);
- 2a. The spiritual commitment and obligation for continued spiritual development that accompanies service on a board (half session);
- 2b. The accountability expected of board members to share responsibility equally, define clearly goals and assignments, choose leaders via a clear and open process, and carry out completely all assigned tasks (half session);
3. An introduction to the relevant sections of the *Book of Order* describing the meaning and commitment of ordination and service as an officer of the church (one session);
4. Background and practices of being a member of the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) (one session);
5. Verbal and written communication skills for meetings and presentations, the boundaries for acceptable discussion inside and outside of meetings, the structure of a written report (a brief summary with conclusions and a body that justifies them), and the obligation of each committee to communicate its activities to supervisory boards (one session); and,
6. Meeting management skills (perhaps with the assistance of a consultant) including scheduling and convening meetings, following a defined agenda, facilitating full participation of committee members, clarifying responsibilities, and assigning action items (one session).

Outreach and Missions

*By God's grace and through the Holy Spirit, we will grow as disciples of Jesus Christ in one body through scripture, prayer, worship, and service and **express the gospel locally and around the world.***

Sound theology is essential for vibrant mission. Immersed in a culture steeped in relativism and confusion, our minds and hearts must be gripped by the love and grace of God, the authority of Jesus Christ and the uniqueness of His salvation, and the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. In the grasp of this reality, we will find ourselves energized to bear it witness by word and deed. Our hearts will resonate with the apostle Paul's in his affirmation that "Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

We are an evangelical church. To us, 'evangelical' means that we believe in the good news of salvation offered to humanity in Jesus Christ and proclaimed in the Bible. This core conviction gives us direction and calls us to action. Therefore, at the center of Newton Presbyterian's mission is a call to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those outside of our congregation. It is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who calls us to be an outwardly-focused body of believers. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) Jesus charges us:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Just as surely as Jesus calls us to Himself as His disciples, so also He casts us out upon a needy world. By the Holy Spirit we are gifted and empowered to proclaim the gospel message and to manifest the presence of God's kingdom in works of compassion and reconciliation.

As our church considers and develops its work of missions and outreach, attention is required in four distinct spheres: culture (our corporate self-understanding and behavior patterns), connection (the processes by which members become involved in outreach activities and make contact with those whom we seek to serve), coordination (management and operation of outreach programs), and communication (sharing needs, opportunities, and testimonies of God's work).

CULTURE

How does our mission shape our individual and corporate self-understandings and the ways we conduct our lives?

The Great Commission has been at the heart of the culture of NPC. Our church has always maintained a very strong financial commitment to local and foreign missions. This strong support in turn has influenced members to become ministers and missionaries

over the years. However, the direct participation of our congregation in outreach activities over the years has fluctuated between high and low involvement. At present, the level of involvement is relatively low.

How will we change our response to the Great Commission to include both financial support and hands-on participation in outreach and mission activities? First, each of us needs an expanded vision of our own identity as an outreaching person. This sense of *personal* mission will foster a church culture in which mission begins with our daily lives at home, at work, in our communities, and in all other spheres of our daily lives. Second, we need to refresh and deepen our corporate identity as an outreaching community understanding that witness for Christ is central to who we are as a body.

Such developments in our culture require spiritual growth. Therefore, we must look to God in prayer and employ means such as preaching, youth and adult education, small groups, and most importantly, direct participation in outreach activities. Experiencing God through outreach is as vital to each member's spiritual growth as biblical study, prayer, and worship. James exhorts us:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? (James 2: 14 – 17)

Faith unaccompanied by actions is dead.

CONNECTION

How will individuals become connected with missions and outreach opportunities, and how will we connect with the individuals whom God is leading us to serve?

As disciples of Jesus Christ, each of us is commanded and empowered to reach out to others in His name. Jesus calls us to love:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22: 37-39)

The connecting bond between God, our neighbors, and us is love—God's love. Who is our neighbor? How do we reach out? Christ teaches us:

“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.... Whatever you did for the least of these my brothers you did for me.” (Matthew 25: 35-38, 40)

Through both formal programs and informally God will lead us to respond to those around us and demonstrate to them the love and compassion of God. In the name of Christ we may offer a simple welcome to a visitor, care for someone in pain, offer a word of peace and reconciliation, or help to meet the basic needs of others.

Likewise, it is vitally important that we attend to our neighbor's spiritual needs and sensitively articulate how he or she can come to personal faith in Christ. Some fear

evangelism thinking that it requires knocking on strangers' doors or open-air preaching. However, the path to faith in Christ may be marked in many manners and in many places along the way. We participate as we live authentic lives of faith, invite friends to participate in church activities, share from our own stories of faith, suggest readings, or answer questions about God.

It is our love for God and God's love expressed through us that leads us to connect with those around us and to share Christ's good news. Moreover, it is God's love working within them that draws them to faith in Christ and transforms their lives.

As disciples of Christ, we need to strengthen our connections with others. We need to move from the comfort of our world to respond to the cries of God's world. We call upon the Outreach and Missions Committee (see below) and the entire congregation to consider ways in which we can demonstrate God's love directly to others including the following recommendations.

- We will reach out to others with God's love as individuals and as a community of Christians in all of our contacts throughout the week.
- We will ensure that visitors feel welcome during church services and other gatherings greeting them at the door, addressing them from the pulpit, and embracing them in the congregation (see also "Relationships and Communication").
- We will develop plans for responding to persons outside of our congregation who request emergency food, shelter, or money.
- We will investigate opportunities to meet the needs of others such as hosting international students or tutoring inner-city school children.
- We will look for opportunities for families and persons of different generations to serve in short-term ministries such as the mission trips to Montana, Habitat for Humanity (helping to build houses), and Project Angel Tree (caring for families of prisoners).
- We will pray for short-term and long-term missionaries sent out by our church to other parts of the country or other nations, write to them, support them in tangible ways (including joining them), and welcome them warmly upon their return.
- We will seek to create partnerships with other churches and organizations that are engaged actively in specific ministries.
- We can open our physical facilities to community groups with special needs such as Twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous.

COORDINATION

How should we coordinate outreach and mission activities at NPC?

God is calling us to reach out and share the gospel beyond our congregation. Since outreach and missions are at the heart of this church, spiritual and administrative leadership in these areas is critical. This leadership will be provided by the associate pastor, who will help develop and coordinate effective outreach and ministry. The associate pastor will be a member of the Outreach and Missions Committee (see below) and thereby serve as a liaison to the staff and session.

We recommend changing the name of the Mission Board to the 'Outreach and Missions Committee' and making it a committee of the session. Selection of the committee members would follow the current process for designating session committee members. We also recommend changing the structure of the Outreach and Missions Committee by asking some members to focus on outreach activities, some on administrative tasks, some on support for foreign missionaries, and others on communication.

The committee should investigate how we can develop active outreach programs through the organizations that we currently support financially. The focus of the Outreach and Missions Committee should become more equally balanced between foreign and local missions. In particular, our church should support and engage in more hands-on ministries. The committee also should review its budget for various missions to ensure that these new priorities are funded in a balanced fashion.

COMMUNICATION

How can we increase awareness of the needs and opportunities for outreach and mission as well as testimonies of God's work in and through our efforts?

We believe that outreach can be made more accessible to a greater number of members. We recommend communicating in ways that do not make people feel that they must be an "insider" to participate in or initiate a program. We recommend clearly identifiable outreach programs, frequent and broad exposure to missions opportunities, and recounting the stories (in worship, classes, bulletins, and newsletters) of how individuals or programs got started.

We believe that God has richly blessed our church with gifts, resources, and desire to join Christ in His mission to the world both locally and globally. In fact, many of us are actively engaged in missions in various ways. At the same time, however, we often remain ignorant of one another's efforts and are therefore unable to join in celebration, thanksgiving, prayer, and participation. We propose that this communication occur in part during worship services. In the *Book of Order*, the Directory for Worship reminds us that,

As the Holy Spirit has graced each member with particular gifts for strengthening the body of Christ for mission, so worship should provide opportunities to

recognize these gifts and to offer them to serve Christ in the church and in the world (W-2.5002; cf. W-2.6001d-e).

In addition to hearing the Word proclaimed and receiving it enacted in the Sacraments, we are invited to respond to the Word as we are made aware of one another's participation in witness and reconciliation. This may be done through brief interviews, testimonies, and perhaps using the bulletin to feature various outreach efforts (on the cover or with a full-page insert).

In all of these forms of communication, our intent is not merely to showcase formal missions and outreach ventures but also the efforts of the broader congregation in outreach. We should share the stories of simple acts of neighborly love or witness. Someone might relate how touched they were as they visited someone in a nursing home or tell the story of how they shared their story of faith with a co-worker. Such communication would draw us together and challenge and encourage us in our own efforts of love and faith as disciples of Jesus Christ.

As we cultivate a *culture* fully informed by the Great Commission, we will make loving *connections* between our community and the needs of the world, efficiently *coordinating* these opportunities for maximum participation and impact and *communicating* frequently and clearly with one another all that God is doing in and through us.