

A WAY FORWARD

DISCERNING GODS' PLAN FOR
CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
LONGMONT

**I DIDN'T JUST MAKE
THIS UP**

SOME SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS

THIS WAY IS NEW...BUT IT'S NOT...


Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, **and I will bless you**, and make your name great, **so that you will be a blessing**. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; **and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

Genesis 12:1-3



I hate, I despise your festivals, and **I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.** Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. **But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**

Amos 5:21-24



When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ **I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.** Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. **By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**”

John 13:31-35




And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go** therefore 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 that I have commanded you.** And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20




When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, so I send you.**” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”**

John 20:19-22




They **devoted themselves** to the apostles' **teaching** and **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, **praising God** and **having the goodwill of all the people**. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-43, 46-47




“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, **who was I that I could hinder God?**” When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, **“Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”**

Acts 11:15-18




Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, **and they spoke the word to no one except Jews.** ²⁰ But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, **spoke to the Hellenists also**, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The hand of the Lord was with them, and **a great number became believers and turned to the Lord.** ²² News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.



²³ When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. **And a great many people were brought to the Lord.** ²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”

Acts 11:19-26



WHAT THE SCRIPTURE TELLS US

SOME CONCLUSIONS

- God is a sending-forth God
- God has a mission, the *missio Dei*, to bless and reconcile all the nations to Godself
- We, the church, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit, are a primary instrument of that blessing
- God's church does not have a mission; God's mission has the church
- Apart from our participation in God's mission, our worship and professions of faith mean little to God.



WHICH LEADS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF CHURCH AS...

ekklesia

If God is a sending-forth God, then we are

“the called-out ones.”

Church was a place of worship and edification,
but toward what end?

Works of service for and among the body of Christ
to spread the Gospel and grow the Kingdom.

Rhythm of “called in-called out.”

CHRIST'S CHURCH IS TO BE...

Missional

A church that defines its life by and organizes its ministry around the call to be an agent of God's mission in the world.

Incarnational

A church that faithfully, visibly lives its commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of the community it's called to serve.



A LITTLE HISTORY IS A GOOD THING

WHAT HAPPENED TO WHAT GOD INTENDED

AND SO IT WAS, UNTIL...

The early church, as chronicled in the Book of Acts, was **missional** and **incarnational**, which is how the church grew during the First and Second Centuries A.D.

THEN...

February 27, 380...Emperor Theodosius I...**Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire...to be a Roman citizen was to be a Christian**

- Christians were no longer missionaries, they were church members.
- *Missional* and *incarnational* church became *institutional* and *attractional* church.
- Emphasis shifted from growing the Kingdom to growing the church, which meant increasing effort spent maintaining church structures.
- Instead of taking the message to people (missional), churches provided spaces and programs and let the people come to the message (attractional).




The church—and, presumably, the Kingdom—continued to grow as long as attending church and church membership was part of the culture.


But for each generation since the 1960s...

- Church has become increasingly marginalized in the culture at large
- Church attendance and membership has decreased in importance
- For the majority of individuals born since 1990, church attendance and membership is not even on their radar screen

THE SURVEY SAYS...

SOME STATISTICS TO PONDER WITH
FEAR AND TREMBLING

- In 2002, over 80% of Americans identified themselves as “Christian.”
 - Approximately 4000 churches close their doors every year in the United States.
 - Every mainline denomination in the United States has been in decline each year for the last 20 years.
 - In 2002, only 18% of Americans attended church “regularly.”
 - On average, each year 2.7 million church members quit going to church.
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- In 2008, 80% of American teenagers “were engaged in church to some significant degree.” By the time they are 22, 70% will have left the church.
 - Busters (born between 1965 and 1983) and Mosaics (born between 1984 and 2002) are significantly less likely to believe a person's faith in God is meant to be developed by involvement in a local church.
 - Mosaics are significantly less likely to return to church once they become parents.
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- Busters and Mosaics put a high value on service, helping others, and actually living what you profess to believe.
- Busters and Mosaics typically have a high opinion of Jesus Christ but a low opinion of Christians, Christianity, and the Church which they see as judgmental, hypocritical, and self-serving.



WHICH MEANS...

The mission field for the church today is no longer overseas but in our own communities.

The mission field is comprised overwhelmingly of Busters and Mosaics.

Busters and Mosaics and subsequent generations are increasingly less likely to connect with traditional, attractional church.

No matter how well we do traditional, attractional church, we will never reach our mission field. If what we're doing isn't working, doing it better won't help.



BUT THE CHALLENGE OF ATTRACTIVE CHURCH IS NOT JUST OUTSIDE OUR DOORS...

Comments from the *2010 Mission Study*:

- Lack of opportunities in adult education...
- Education programs lack connectedness and continuity...
- Lack of youth involvement...
- There is a need for fellowship activities...
- Too few classrooms limit our programs and outreach...
- The old sanctuary limits the types of worship elements possible...



“Identified weaknesses were the decline in membership and that a relatively small proportion of people are involved in leadership (20% do 80% of the work)... As with most churches, Central needs more congregational involvement, and more volunteers to develop into leaders.”

**Attractional church,
by its nature,
is
labor- and resource-intensive.**

SO...A WAY FORWARD...

To once again be “church” as Jesus intended...

A church that is

missional

and

incarnational.



**AND GUESS WHAT?
IT'S NOT JUST SCRIPTURAL...
IT'S IN OUR POLITY...**

The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ.

Book of Order, F-1.01

BEING MISSIONAL....

BEING INCARNATIONAL....

WHAT WILL IT MEAN? WHAT WILL IT
LOOK LIKE?

WHAT WILL IT

FIRST: IT'S NOT A CASE OF EITHER/OR BUT BOTH/AND...

Traditional, attractional church may not be our future long-term, but it's very much our past and still part of our present...and we do it well.

We have a responsibility to honor our members for whom traditional, attractional church *is* church.

While some current members will embrace missional, incarnational church, many will not.

There will, for a time, continue to be individuals to whom traditional, attractional church speaks.



CHANGE: THE MENTAL IS HALF THE BATTLE

The initial, and in many ways most important, change will be in our understanding of what it means to be “church.”

Structural and programmatic changes will follow, in time, from the intellectual and emotional changes.

Remember: missional, incarnational church is not a fad or the latest church-growth gimmick, not a new program to try. It is Scriptural, theologically sound, and true to our Presbyterian traditions.



SIX CHANGES IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE “CHURCH”

1. From inward focus to outward focus.
2. From church growth to Kingdom growth.
3. From attending and serving in the church to equipping to be and to serve in the community.



4. From giving what we want the community to have to asking what the community needs.
5. From duplication of ministries to partnering with existing ministries.
6. From “ours” to “God’s.”




CHANGE #1:

FROM INWARD FOCUS TO OUTWARD FOCUS

“Will we remain outside of the community inviting people in or will we go to our communities, seeking to be a transforming agent? The church is called to be separate in lifestyle but never called to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence.”

Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation

- The church is not a club where you're welcome as long as you think and act like club members do. The church is the one organization that exists for people who are *not* its members.

- Individual growth is not the *goal* of discipleship and spiritual formation, but a *consequence*.
 - Individual growth in discipleship and spiritual formation is always in service to the Kingdom
 - The litmus test for anything we do is not *how will this make life at Central PC better?* but *how will this make life in Longmont and the Kingdom better?*
 - We view our facilities and communication from the viewpoint of the stranger: hospitality is key.
 - Mission, understood broadly, is not something we do or support, it is what we are.
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- What we profess and practice inside the church is useful to the extent we live it outside the church in our daily spheres of influence.

“To have a faith that can be observed is to be living out the truths we want others to grasp and the life of the Savior we want them to know.”

Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation




CHANGE #2: FROM CHURCH GROWTH TO KINGDOM GROWTH

- The measure of our success will no longer be increase in membership but increase in community impact; no longer increase in church activity but community transformation.

“How many church activities for the already-saved are justified when there are people who have never been touched with Jesus’ love?”

Reggie McNeal

The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church

- The goal of evangelism is not getting people to church but getting people in relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - Many of the individuals we spend the most time with will never set foot in Central Presbyterian Church—and that’s OK!
 - We will emphasize “lifestyle evangelism”: how we live, day-in and day-out will be our greatest witness.
 - We will emphasize “sphere of influence mission”: we are all missionaries and the people among whom we live and work each day are our mission field.
 - “It only counts if you do it at church”: we will release our members to do ministry in the community.
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CHANGE #3: FROM ATTENDING AND SERVING IN THE CHURCH TO EQUIPPING TO BE AND TO SERVE IN THE COMMUNITY

- God has gifted us to grow the Kingdom, not the church.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. The gifts he gave were...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...

Ephesians 4:7, 11-12

- Entry point for church involvement won't *de facto* be the church; equally, it will be the community.

- Lay leadership will not be defined primarily in terms of committees but of ownership of ministries and mission.
 - Identify spiritual gifts not to plug people into committees but to connect them with mission and ministry opportunities within the church and within the community.
 - Streamline the organizational structure of the church so we are investing less resources in committee maintenance and more in ministry and mission.
 - Be willing to ask at all times of all programs and ministries of the church: *is this the most efficient, effective, faithful way to do this?*
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CHANGE #4: FROM GIVING WHAT WE WANT THE COMMUNITY TO HAVE TO ASKING WHAT THE COMMUNITY NEEDS.

- “You have to catch the fish before you can clean ‘em”:
Our neighbors may not want to be Presbyterians.

We want to increase our outreach to the community to increase diversity across different ages, cultures and generations. This would include increasing our visibility, and community activities. We have a large Hispanic population in our neighborhood and want to foster relationships with them.

2010 Mission Study, p.10



- Hispanics are a significant component of our mission field: 39% of the population within a 1-mile radius of the church is Hispanic. BUT...what are the actual needs of the Hispanic community that we are called and gifted to help meet?
- Our mission field is not just defined ethnically but socio-economically: as a downtown church, what are the downtown challenges?
- A primary task of the Mission Committee: networking with those in the community who know what the needs of the community are.



CHANGE #5: FROM DUPLICATION OF MINISTRIES TO PARTNERING WITH EXISTING MINISTRIES.

- It isn't a Presbyterian thing—it's a Kingdom thing. Many church members are already involved in community outreach via secular service agencies.
- Address the needs of the community, first, by partnering with ministries already working to meet a need and, second, by identifying unmet needs we are called/gifted to meet alone or in partnership.


- Employ “checkbook mission” judiciously, emphasizing mission that provides ongoing opportunity for “sweat equity.”

“Most human service agencies need what the church could readily supply—caring volunteers, financial support and even facilities. The door is always open for servants wanting to serve and help. We form partnerships not around theology but around our common concern and love for the city.”

Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation



CHANGE #6: FROM “OURS” TO “GOD’S”

- Central Presbyterian Church does not belong to us—it belongs to Jesus Christ.
 - The gifts and blessings we receive are not to benefit us but to benefit the Kingdom.
 - We were bought at a price. Each of our lives was worth the life of the Son of God. Therefore, we give not in response to the church’s need to receive but in response to what God, through Jesus Christ, has done for us.
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- Faithful stewardship is not naïve stewardship, but it is grounded in a mindset of *abundance*, not a mindset of *scarcity*.
- God never calls people to work God does not provide the means to do.
- The Holy Spirit does not revitalize a church to make it a happier place for the people already there. Churches are revitalized because there is new work for them to do.



MISSIONAL & INCARNATIONAL INITIATIVES

FIVE SPECIFIC STEPS FOR US TO TAKE

HONOR AND NURTURE OUR TRADITIONS

- Continue our traditional worship service.
- Continue existing Christian Education programs and other ministries as long as we faithfully can for those in the congregation nurtured by them.
- Maintain our identity as a PCUSA congregation and our connectional relationship with other PCUSA congregations, the presbytery, and the synod as long as we faithfully can, but plan for the change that is inevitably coming.



CREATE A MISSIONAL/INCARNATIONAL CULTURE @ CENTRAL PC

- While continuing to honor our traditions and being sensitive to the reality that many in the congregation will not embrace a missional/incarnational understanding of “church,” begin to intentionally think and speak in missional/incarnational terms.
- Specifically...



Emphasize that being missional and incarnational is Scriptural and in-line with the Reformed Tradition and presbyterianism. We're not doing this because we need to grow the church in the face of a changing population but because it's *right*.

Emphasize the “Six Changes in Our Understanding of What It Means to Be Church”:


1. From inward focus to outward focus.
2. From church growth to Kingdom growth.




3. From attending and serving in the church to equipping to be and to serve in the community.
4. From giving what we want the community to have to asking what the community needs.
5. From duplication of ministries to partnering with existing ministries.
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IMPLEMENT CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP

- Our long-term future is not in traditional or blended worship because neither is a style to which our primary mission field responds.
 - Our current blended service at 11:00 will not work because it remains too traditional.
 - The contemporary service may or may not replace the blended service.
 - Concurrently, we need to rethink the time of the traditional service if moving it will reach a greater number of people.
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IMPLEMENT A MINISTRY OF “COMMUNITY GROUPS”

- The primary (but not exclusive) purpose of community groups is two-fold: discipleship and service
 - Each group comprised of 8-12 members
 - Groups can be organized any number of ways (by age, interest, gender, marital status, etc.)
 - Each group would include a mix of members of Central and non-members
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- Each group should strive to include people who are not members of any church, perhaps not even Christian
- Groups would meet weekly or bi-weekly
- Groups have the freedom to structure themselves and pursue whatever they wish providing the experience includes these three components: fellowship, education, and mission
- Begin the ministry with one or two new groups; existing small groups can reconstitute as community groups if they agree to open their membership and follow these guidelines



- When community groups are functioning healthily and in sufficient numbers, people will come to the church for worship and church-wide fellowship events
 - Many of the Christian education, evangelism, and pastoral care functions of the church will gradually pass to the community groups
 - A healthy community group ministry relieves church staff and leadership of the labor-intensive need to continually develop new programs
 - A healthy community group ministry replicates the life of the early church with its rhythm of “called in, called out”
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CONSTRUCT A MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING

- Construct a new building that provides:
 - 1) a multi-purpose room that would double as a fellowship hall large enough to accommodate the congregation and a worship space (w/stage) to accommodate a contemporary worship service;
 - 2) a commercial kitchen;
 - 3) a foyer of sufficient size and space to provide a primary, visitor-friendly entrance to our facility;



4) rooms that can double as classrooms and meeting rooms;

5) elevator access to the second floor of the Goerner Wing.

- The primary reason for a new building is that it will better enable us to do the mission to which we're called. Among other things, we'd allow community groups looking for meeting space to use our facility *free of charge*.
- 10% of funds raised for construction of a new building would be tithed to support of local mission.



- A new building would allow more overtly-missional usage of portions of the existing buildings.
- The very appearance of our current campus that we find meaningful is a significant hindrance to our mission: what we see as historic and beautiful most of our mission field sees as representative of all they dislike about traditional churches.

