



Westminster's
emphasis on mission

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MISSION IS WHAT we call the extension of Westminster's ministry beyond the bounds of our congregation. It's one of the defining parts of our work as a church.

In December 2012, Westminster's Session approved a New Emphasis on Mission, a three-year assessment of where our next call to mission should focus. It has three parts:

- Increasing participation
- Strengthening core missions
- Reimagining mission budgets

To clarify this mission calling, we want to explain each of these three parts and why they are important. I hope that, as you read this, our congregation's long and passionate commitment to mission work will be made evident.

Grace and peace,



Rev. Chandler Stokes, *senior pastor*



What people are saying

“I am excited that our new emphasis on mission, especially the participation part, is the vocabulary with which we speak our vision of ‘...serving God and others joyfully.’”

—Rev. David Baak, *designated associate pastor for mission and pastoral care*



“Mission is our response to God’s commission in our lives.”

—Rev. Katherine Baker, *minister for mission and young adults*



Our mission leaders on Session



Peter Boumgarden,
elder for Community Ministries



Pete Land,
elder for Worldwide Ministries

Session's statement on mission

UNDERSTANDING AND ACTING ON OUR CALL TO PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION

THE MISSION STATEMENT of Westminster Presbyterian Church includes the following:

Westminster Presbyterian Church seeks to lead and serve in ...serving God and others joyfully by discerning and supporting our collective and individual calls to faithfulness; stewarding our resources, including those of time, money, and Creation; understanding and acting on our call to partnership in worldwide and community mission; caring imaginatively for the marginalized, sick, and lonely; and holding each other in prayer.

As we seek to understand what these phrases call us to be and to do, it is important that we have a clear understanding of our definition of “mission.” Mission is the extension of our church’s ministry beyond the bounds of our congregation. There are two values that are an essential part of this definition: Participation and partnership.

Participation can include monetary giving, spiritual support—such as prayer—or physical involvement with work and fellowship. While monetary gifts are valuable and necessary, our goal for both community and worldwide ministry is to reach beyond participation toward partnership between our congregation and others. As we examine and re-envision our goal for both community and worldwide mission, we want to expand our understanding of what participation might mean for both our congregation and those with who we are in mission. Partnership rather than patronage is an important value in assessing our role in mission.

Partnership implies a reciprocal relationship and exchange of gifts and allows for the possibility of growth and understanding that can deepen over time. It also implies a level of commitment that may require physical, spiritual, personal, and monetary investment, depending on the situation. Partnership rather than patronage in mission necessitates openness and forbearance, recognizing we may not know or be in control of outcomes in favor of participating in a process that will impact all those who choose to take part. As we continue the process of discernment for mission, the concept of participation through partnership may be a valuable way for us to re-prioritize our goals and challenge each other to grow.

—passed by Session on December 3, 2012

Increasing participation

FIRST AND FOREMOST: we're emphasizing participation in hands-on mission work.

It's not enough to just write a check and hope somebody else does the work for us; it's time to get our hands dirty. In the New Emphasis on Mission, Session says this:

While monetary gifts are valuable and necessary, our goal for both community and worldwide ministry is to reach beyond participation toward partnership between our congregation and others. As we examine and re-envision our goal for both community and worldwide mission giving, we want to expand our understanding of what participation might mean for both our congregation and those with whom we are in mission.

Mission at Westminster has two sides: Community, and Worldwide. In both of these, there are abundant opportunities to get involved and make a difference:

- In our community, we're talking about partnering with people outside our congregation and revitalizing our community through participation in local ministries.
- In the world, we want to be involved through partnerships, whether it's a day in Benton Harbor or a week in Cuba. We're capable of having a worldwide impact.

And *we're not just talking about this*. We want to help get each other involved.

On the next page, you'll find a list of opportunities to get involved in volunteering. A Westminster member is already volunteering with each of these, so you won't be walking in alone. We want participation in mission to be collaborative: Meeting other people in the congregation, sharing your experiences, and praying for each other. In that way, we as a faith community can hear stories from each other that remind us of God's presence in our lives and encourage us forward in service.

GROWING WHAT YOU ARE ALREADY DOING

The list of opportunities is incomplete, however: It's missing the work you're already doing. If you're already involved in volunteer activities, we want to include those in our list and encourage you to tell others about what you're doing. By doing so, you'll help our list grow and provide new ways for others in the congregation to join along with you.

If you're volunteering or working with a mission agency, let us know! Contact Rev. Katherine Baker (katieb@westminstergr.org or 616-717-5589) or David Baak (davidb@westminstergr.org or 616-717-5544).

Opportunities to get involved

SESSION REQUESTED THAT Westminster's Community Ministries Committee, in consultation with other mission committees, provide the congregation with a regular and updated list of ways to participate in mission. Here are ways you can get involved, and who to talk to about them:

REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES

Time commitment: One hour per week or per month.

1. **Mentoring** at Guiding Light Mission
Westminster contact: Larry Slager (lslager@lifeonthestreet.org)
2. **Child tutoring** at Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy
Westminster contact: Leah Muir (mlktutoringcenter@gmail.com)
3. **Adult literacy one-to-one tutoring** at the Literacy Center of West Michigan
Westminster contact: Linda Paul (lbpaul1961@yahoo.com)
4. **Shelter and mentor activities** at Family Promise
Westminster contact: Britt Campbell (conlonhouse@sbcglobal.net)
5. **Activities** at the Westminster Food Pantry
Westminster contact: Steve Pastoor (steve@pastoorllc.com)

Other opportunities with Westminster connections include: Heartside Ministry and Art Studio, Degagé, Senior Neighbors, hospitals, the Congregational Partnership Housing Program, the American Red Cross, Booth Family Services, and Home Repair Services.

OCCASIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Time commitment: Once a year.

1. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration activities
Westminster contact: Diane Helle (mcelfishhelle@comcast.net)
2. Camp Henry Work Day and summer camp opportunities
Westminster contact: Jeff Jacobs (jake@camphenry.org)
3. Benton Harbor First Presbyterian Church:
Westminster contact: Julie Brien (godspecialkid@gmail.com)
4. Cuba with First Hand Aid
Westminster contact: Worldwide Ministries Committee (katieb@westminstergr.org)

Other opportunities with Westminster connections include: Partners for a Racism-Free Community Forum representative, mission trips with other organizations, Habitat for Humanity, and refugee resettlement through Bethany Christian Services.

And this list is just a start; we continue to update this list with more opportunities.

Strengthening core missions

WESTMINSTER HAS THREE core missions: **WCDC**, **Camp Henry**, and the **Downtown Food Pantry**. Before taking on any new big project, Session wants to be sure these core missions are healthy.

WESTMINSTER CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

We were on the brink of closing WCDC at the end of 2009, but it has now fully recovered, and is stronger than ever. Amber Marz-Momany, WCDC's director, has done an outstanding job of rebuilding the center's programming and enrollment. In 2013, WCDC passed its five-year site visit with NAEYC, the largest accreditor in the nation for early childhood education.

WCDC is the model for how our core missions can thrive. By carefully allotting financing and leadership roles, WCDC rebuilt its reputation as a healthy, vital service in our community.

CAMP HENRY

Our goal is to strengthen Camp Henry and get it to a sustainable, healthy status like WCDC. Leading this effort is Jeff 'Jake' Jacobs, who joined Camp Henry as its executive director in January 2013.

Through Jake's diligent leadership, and together with the funding pieces Session approved, Camp Henry has already begun to recover and thrive. We expect Camp Henry's budget to be on sustainable, revenue-based ground in the coming years.

DOWNTOWN FOOD PANTRY

The Downtown Food Pantry is a source of emergency relief for neighbors in Grand Rapids' Heartside community. The pantry board, which includes representatives from our partners in other downtown congregations, continues to explore how to improve the way food is distributed in Grand Rapids.

In its present form, the pantry often provides emergency response to a chronic, long-term need, and our gracious, generous volunteers help provide a week's worth of food to clients every month. However, this process is insufficient, and there is little chance for building long-term, transformative relationships. The focus is on clients' needs rather than their strengths; the result is that the church fosters dependency, while for the client nothing changes.

In response to this, we are working on a collaborative 'food club' model: A centrally-located, client-choice, membership-based, sliding-scale-fee expansion of the current pantry network. It will increase possibilities for volunteers and clients to build relationships, and would aim to be "a cog in the long-term development wheel of the community," as one of our partners said. Eligible clients would be able to choose supplemental food on their schedule through a voucher system, with a greater variety and availability than is possible now. We expect to begin a pilot project of the food club by the end of 2014.

Reimagining mission budgets

OUR MISSION BUDGET is different from its previous forms: We now include significant additional funding for Camp Henry, changes to denominational missions, and a renewed understanding of how we categorize mission giving.

FUNDING FOR CAMP HENRY

Westminster's mission budgets for 2013-2015 include \$30,000 per year for Camp Henry, to help the camp become fiscally sustainable. Camp Henry's goal is to achieve a revenue-based balanced budget within three years. If successful, money given to the camp in the future will go to scholarship support for campers, rather than day-to-day operations.

CHANGES TO DENOMINATIONAL GIVING

Each year, Westminster gives to the Presbyterian Church USA in two ways: Our regular, expected 'per capita' donation of \$30,000, and an additional \$70,000 to the general mission budget. Money given to the general mission budget has been, for the most part, undesignated—meaning the denomination can use that money however it sees fit.

Beginning in 2013, we set aside \$7,000 (10%) of the \$70,000 amount we normally give, and directing it instead to NEXT Church.

NEXT Church is an organization born from the recognition that denominations like the PCUSA are in decline. Amidst infighting and political struggles, Presbyterian focus on mission—for example, building schools and hospitals—has suffered. In response, NEXT Church seeks to empower Presbyterian churches in mission, and to be the glue that holds churches together as the denomination finds its way forward.

Of the \$7,000 set aside for NEXT Church, \$5,000 is given to the organization, and \$2,000 is used to help Westminster staff and members attend its annual conferences.

HOW WE CATEGORIZE MISSION GIVING

Historically, mission giving has been divided two ways: Community ministries, for work within Kent County; and worldwide mission, for work outside Kent County.

We now divide our mission budget differently: Instead of community and worldwide mission being the categories, we are instead dividing the mission budget between direct mission and mission support. 'Direct mission' is money we don't control; for example, money given to disaster relief, where we write a check. 'Mission support' is money we control and use for encouraging participation and supporting and strengthening our mission work.

In dividing the mission budget this way, we discovered we give less to direct mission and much more to mission support than we thought. In the 2013 budget, for example, approximately 10% of our revenue was for direct mission, while 15% was used for mission support.