

## ATTACHMENT A

### **Strategic Plan – Mission to North America** ***Church Planting, Campus Ministry, and Evangelism and Discipleship*** (Adopted, January 9, 2018)

In keeping with the Vision Statement of First Presbyterian Church of Jackson that it “exists to glorify God by making disciples on the North State Street corridor, in the greater Jackson area, and around the world,” the Mission to North America Committee (MNA) of First Presbyterian Church of Jackson has adopted the following Mission Statement:

**Our mission is to encourage, equip, and enable God’s people to share God’s love, in word and deed, by working to establish gospel-centered, mercy-loving, and grace-filled communities primarily through newly planted churches and on college campuses - locally, regionally, and nationally.**

#### **A. MOTIVATING CONVICTIONS**

Motivating Convictions are those basic affirmations about God, His nature, His mission, His church, and His world that fuel our commitment to mission and define His inescapable call for us. So, what fundamental convictions motivate us in mission?

##### **1. God’s Mission**

We begin by defining our mission. If God is our Lord and King, then our mission, as those called by the grace and mercy of God, out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9) means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation, and with God’s resources, to participate in God’s own mission to seek and save His people. This mission is an “activity of the church” but is God’s mission – initiated by God to be accomplished by the Spirit of God, toward God’s destined end – all for God’s own glory.

This “mission” is fundamentally about the very nature and character of God. There is something about God that makes this mission inevitable and irrepressible. God is a missionary God. As Jesus noted: “[T]rue worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, **for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.**” (John 4:23). Both individually (as His children and members in His kingdom) and collectively (as His bride, the church), we have the privilege of participating in His mission with him and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

***We are committed to this mission because it is God’s own mission that flows from God’s own character.***

##### **2. Scripture is the narrative of God’s mission.**

The Bible does not just contain a few texts that just happen to provide rationale for mission. Rather, all of Scripture tells the story of the mission of God in human history making Himself known to and seeking after sinful humanity. Scripture begins with God’s purpose in creation,

reveals the conflicts generated by human rebellion against that purpose, and is the story of God's redemptive purposes being worked out throughout human history, until it climaxes in the new creation. The Bible is not just a book that talks about mission from time to time; it is the story of God's mission for the world – a “rescue mission” – to “seek and save the lost.” (Luke 19:10).

***We are committed to this mission because the narrative of Scripture reflects the mission of God – seeking after His people to make Himself known to them.***

### **3. Indicatives and Imperatives in Mission**

*Indicatives* refer to who we are – they are our DNA. An indicative is a property or a characteristic. *Imperatives* are commands – they are what we are to do. In the Bible, particularly in Paul's letters, the imperative flow from the indicatives; the indicative precedes the imperative. Imperatives are rooted in indicatives. Indicatives fuel and motivate our following the imperatives.

Our understanding of mission is often limited to the imperative. “Go ye therefore...” – so we go. A complete understanding of the basis for mission however, understands mission in the indicative. Who we are defines our mission apart from any explicit command. As God's people and as co-participants in His mission, we ourselves are a missionary community, just as God is a missionary God. We are a called people, and we are sent people. Just as mission is the very nature and character of God, so is it also to be the essential identity of the church. And it is from the basis of our missionary identity – our characteristics, our DNA – that the imperatives are given. Our mandate for mission (both individually and as the church) is not primarily a collection of missionary imperatives, but in the understanding, recognition, and affirmation of our own identity as God's people who are engaged in God's mission. Because of who we are, and because of what God has done for us through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, we are made to be part of God's mission. We are not our own; our lives are missionary lives.

***We are committed to mission because our very identity demands it – we are a missionary people.***

### **4. Mission and Worship**

Mission is not an end unto itself. It is because God alone is worthy of all worship from every tribe and nation, and every people and tongue, that we engage in mission. And it because our desire is to see Christ exalted to the ends of the earth, that we are committed to God's global purposes. We affirm with John Piper:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. (*Let the Nations Be Glad!* at 11).

Missions is a temporary, but present, necessity. The Church must take the Gospel into the world to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20) so that those may fulfill their primary purpose in this life – to glorify God and enjoy him forever. As Kevin DeYoung expressed it:

The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord Jesus and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father. (*What is the Mission of the Church?* at 62)

***We are committed to mission because God alone is worthy to be praised in all the earth.***

## **B. OUR STRATEGIC VISION**

Our Strategic Vision is what places flesh and bone on our Motivating Convictions. How do these Motivating Convictions find *particular* expression at First Presbyterian Church? How will we, as a particular body of believers, utilize our finite supply of time, resources and energy for mission? The Strategic Vision provides focus and direction for us as we are faced with innumerable urgent and competing needs that we cannot meet. We begin by recognizing, and we are immensely grateful for, other communities of believers whose strategic vision and priorities differs greatly from our own. We rejoice that through God's providence, while there is one body, there are many parts with different functions and callings (see Rom. 12: 4-8; 1 Cor. 12: 12-27).

We believe that we are called to focus on two primary areas of strategic importance for our MNA mission: Church Planting and Campus Ministry. (While some related Evangelism and Discipleship ministries could still be supported by MNA, we believe that any significant Evangelism and Discipleship ministries should be supported by the Benevolence Budget rather than by MNA.)

Within Church Planting and Campus Ministry (and even Evangelism and Discipleship), we also will establish priorities and areas of focus. These priorities should not be understood to exclude alternatives or to preclude creativity or flexibility. There may be ministry opportunities, cooperative efforts, or partnerships that may arise from time to time that do not fit neatly within these stated priorities but to which we are called to respond affirmatively. Still, we are committed to allocating our resources and focusing and working with others who are best aligned to our Strategic Vision.

### **1. Ministry Focus: Church-Planting and Campus Ministry**

*We will focus our resources primarily on Church Planting efforts and Campus Ministry.*

We believe that the church is the primary, God-ordained means for Christian witness in the world. While there are many worthy para-church ministries and organizations, our mission focus will center on the church. It is through the planting, nurturing, revitalizing, and reproducing of vibrant churches that the gospel of Christ is proclaimed and fleshed-out to those who have not yet heard or believed. It is the church, in all its imperfections, that is Christ's Bride, and that should reflect God's mission to the surrounding community and to the world.

Church Planting and Campus Ministry fill different roles in this process. Each has a different target audience, and each will use different techniques and methods, but both will share the same Gospel. Each will have a different effect on the church, but both are integrally connected to the

mission of the church. Church Planting focuses directly on the mission of the church here and now, while Campus Ministry often plants the seeds that are harvested more fully by the various churches that students join after they complete their secondary education.

As stated below, because we believe that the church is the primary, God-ordained means for Christian witness in the world, Church Planting and Campus Ministry are the primary and secondary goals of MNA because they are the most effective evangelism and discipleship ministries, so our support for other evangelism and discipleship ministries of MNA ordinarily will be related to Church Planting and Campus Ministry, and necessarily will be limited. If an Evangelism and Discipleship ministry is significant, but does not meet our strategic focus, it may be considered for support by the Benevolence Budget of the Church instead of through the MNA budget.

## **2. Allocation of Assets: Desired Percentages**

To accomplish our mission, we believe that we should allocate assets available to the MNA Committee as follows:

Church Planting – 45%

Campus Ministry – 35%

Evangelism and Discipleship – 5%

MNA General Fund – 5% (approximately 10% of Church Planting Funds/Contributions)

Short-term Mission Trips – 5%

Visitation Budget – 5%

### **I. CHURCH PLANTING**

#### **A. Reasons for Church Planting**

We want to emphasize starting or planting churches for both theological and practical reasons. Here are six reasons for established churches to plant churches:<sup>1</sup>

**1. People need Jesus.** *Christianity Today* says church planting has replaced crusade evangelism as the preferred evangelistic method for evangelicals in North America today. Church planting has been successful in establishing new churches. It's difficult to deny the fact that church

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<sup>1</sup> Paraphrased from Ed Stetzer, *6 Reasons Established Churches Should Plant Churches*, *Christianity Today* (November 10, 2014), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/november/6-reasons-established-churches-should-plant-churches.html>.

plants reach more lost people with the good news, and since people need Jesus we need a whole lot more church planting.

**2. It is the New Testament pattern.** In the biblical record, we constantly see churches sending people to other churches, starting churches, and checking on how churches are doing. That's what a heart set on multiplication does. That's what Great Commission churches do. When the apostles and disciples heard the Great Commission, we might consider what they did in response. They did not just evangelize. They congregationalized. When the disciples heard the Great Commission, they planted churches. So should we. When the (relatively) established church at Antioch heard from the Holy Spirit, they sent out Barnabas and Saul to plant churches. So should we.

**3. For any denomination to thrive, it has to plant churches.** If a denomination has 100 churches, it needs to plant three each year just to break even. It needs to plant five churches each year to grow, and 10 each year to thrive. That means our churches need to be actively and consistently training and sending out planters. When the disciples heard the Great Commission, they planted churches. So should we.

**4. We need to plant churches because planting churches actually can help your church.** The established church is blessed by planting churches. A recent study by Jeff Farmer compared several dozen churches of all sizes that were planting churches with several dozen churches that were not planting churches. Churches that were planting churches—similar sizes, similar backgrounds—were healthier than those that did not. It wasn't merely that the churches were already healthy and then planted. In many cases, the act of planting itself helped these churches become more healthy. It was a product of planting. Planting can benefit a plateaued church. When a church is planted and your people start hearing the amazing stories of people being reached for Christ, it causes them to realize that what God does in church plants, He also can do in established churches. It develops a missional passion and a holy desire to trust the Lord and work toward the same end. They get to ride the tide the church plant rides. Established churches need to plant churches so they can be challenged by their own church plants.

**5. Planting churches is required to reach all of North America with the good news of Jesus Christ.** It's going to take thousands upon thousands of more churches to accomplish this. That's not only because of geography, but also because of culture—that's part of having a missiological lens that leads to church planting among different kinds of people. Your context isn't one culture. It's not like one flat pancake, where you look out and only see what you see up close—a context like yours. It's more like a waffle with divots, and in those divots are people with certain customs and cultures. Established churches should plant churches because we need all kinds of churches to reach the all kinds of people living in different cultures and contexts.

**6. We need some skin in the game.** Denominational giving toward church planting isn't enough. We need to put our own sweat and tears into the process. We need partnerships or we will become a cul-de-sac on the Great Commission highway. Planting a church is like having kids. It's bloody, messy, there's a lot of yelling, but then a beautiful thing is born and you forget about all the problems and you want to do it again. When a church is engaged in church planting directly—not solely through giving to the denomination or a network, as good as that can be—

then you'll see some beautiful church babies born in your own house. Then you'll want to do it again and again. Established churches need to plant churches so they can experience the blessing of having ecclesiological babies!

No one thinks they are fully ready to have a child. But then you have one, and it is a great blessing. Too often, established churches think they will plant when they are "ready" when they are big enough or when they have more money, but "ready" never comes. If you will just go and have a baby—go plant a church—you will be blessed in ways you never imagined, and you will wonder why you waited so long.

Let's plant churches that plant churches that plant churches. Let's trust God to do the things that God likes. God likes to surprise people who have faith in Him. Let's surprise the world by seeing a church multiplication movement birthed that sweeps across this country as churches choose to sacrifice. Let's plant churches that plant churches that plant churches.

## **B. Priorities for Church Planting**

We recognize that God can be at work in more than one place at a time! Still, while we want to plant churches both locally and regionally, our priority in allocating our resources for church planting will be to plant what we hope and pray will be strategic churches in key urban centers.

### **1. Strategic Cities**

*While we will look at appropriate opportunities to plant churches locally and regionally, we will look to invest most of our resources in Church Planting in national cities of strategic influence.*

#### **(a) Urbanization**

The urbanization of the United States is well-documented. In 1890, only 35% of the nation lived in urban areas, but a century later, that number had swelled to 78%. In the last 20 years, that number has increased to 80.7%. That percentage is projected to continue to rise. As one professor of urban growth recently noted, there will continue to be "a multigenerational pattern of young adults preferring more expensive urban areas over lower-cost rural ones because the lifestyles and opportunities in such places make the extra burden of cost worth it." In Arlington, Virginia, the number of millennials increased by 82% from 2007 to 2013. The cities are attracting people, especially younger people, many from unchurched backgrounds who have never clearly heard the Gospel, who come from all across the country and from around the world. City churches are hubs of relationships that link back to family or colleagues across the nation and around the world. Large cities are both magnets – drawing people into them – and transmitters and amplifiers – broadcasting the gospel out into the hinterlands.

## **(b) The Strategic Importance of Cities**

The strategic importance of cities extends beyond the mere logic of numbers. Cities represent centers of political, economic, intellectual and cultural influence, and they exert that influence locally, regionally and nationally, and for some, even globally. A reflection on our current post-Christian era in our country underscores just how critical it is to saturate these cities with churches that worship the true and living God. These churches would stand as communities whose manner of living (openness, brokenness, and loving service) serves as a contrast to and prophetic critique of our modern idolatries, and who have the courage, discernment, and wisdom to engage the dominant culture. The challenge of a planted church would be to live — to do much good — so that the natives will want to meet our King (1 Pet. 2:12).

In light of this sustained movement into major urban centers, we believe that in order to reach the entire nation with the gospel of Christ, we must reach these strategic city centers. This is not to neglect the importance of suburban communities surrounding those urban centers or rural communities. We also need to be responsive to opportunities there as well, but we believe that our resources need to be focused more toward strategic city centers. We believe that the most strategic way to reach the nation, including those suburban and rural communities is to have vital, missional, gospel-centered church planting movements in urban centers here in the United States. There will continue to be an influx of people into these strategic cities, and those city churches can serve as the base from which suburban and rural communities can also be reached. Our focus on global cities is to “*show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*” (Eph. 2:7)

Our focus on major cities of strategic importance is not a matter of seeking to reach the only the elite, but to reach all areas of these cities. Just as cities are centers of political, economic, intellectual and cultural power, they are also concentrated areas of injustice, poverty, racism, violence and immorality. Although these also exist in non-urban settings, they are perpetuated to far greater degrees in cities. In short, we want to reach and minister to both the “outsider” (socially, financially, ethnically, and politically) while also ministering to the “insiders.”

We want to seek the welfare of these strategic cities, just as the Lord told Jeremiah: “*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*” Jeremiah 29:7. We believe that God will use His people to be a blessing to these cities through these planted churches.

## **(c) Urbanites as “Unreached People Groups”**

Although we often think of “unreached people groups” as those persons living under repressive regimes or in fundamentalist Islamic countries, or in remote regions of the world, if one stops to think about our own country and current cultural and legal developments, it is clear to see that many folks in these strategic urban centers have never “heard” the Gospel, and therefore are part of an “unreached people group.”

Our Missions to the World Committee has made a priority for reaching “unreached people groups.” Many of the two billion people in the world who are essentially cut off from the Gospel live in

major urban centers. We believe our church planting efforts also should seek to reach these people, and planting churches in strategic cities is our way of doing that.

#### **(d) Geographic Focus: Major Cities of Strategic Influence**

We will seek to utilize our resources in connection with Church Planting in major cities of strategic influence where there are few, if any, Gospel-centered churches. To the extent these cities are within a non-stop flight from Jackson or are within a four hour drive of Jackson, it would facilitate a more hands-on involvement.

### **2. Regional Churches**

Despite our region being known as “the buckle of the Bible belt,” there are many cities where there is no strong reformed church. By teaming with Reformed University Ministries, we have the ability to help plant churches in cities in our region whether there is a college campus on which an RUF ministry either presently exists or is planned. Another advantage of planting regional churches is that they typically are within a several hour drive of First Presbyterian Church. We could also join with other local churches, either individually or through support to the Mid-South Church Planting Network, in these regional church planting efforts.

### **3. Local/Rural Churches**

At the same time, we must remember that God calls people from all areas and all walks of life. Even Jesus grew up in the “backwoods” of Nazareth in Galilee.<sup>2</sup> Also, in Isaiah 49:6, we are told: “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Rural America is often overlooked in church planting efforts, but the eternal destinies of those living in rural America are just as important as those who have migrated to urban centers.

The Gospel is clearly needed in the rural areas of our country to address not only the spiritual needs, but also social and physical needs. As reported in a *Wall Street Journal* article entitled: “*Rural America is the New ‘Inner City’*”:

Starting in the 1980s, the nation’s basket cases were its urban areas—where a toxic stew of crime, drugs and suburban flight conspired to make large cities the slowest-growing and most troubled places. Today, however, a *Wall Street Journal* analysis shows that by many key measures of socioeconomic well-being, those charts have flipped. In terms of poverty, college attainment, teenage births, divorce, death rates from heart disease and cancer, reliance on federal disability insurance and male labor-force participation, rural counties now rank the worst among the four major U.S. population groupings (the others are big cities, suburbs and medium or small metro areas). In fact, the total rural population—accounting for births, deaths and migration—has declined for five straight years.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See John 1:46: “Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/rural-america-is-the-new-inner-city-1495817008>.



We recognize that a significant number of unchurched people reside in rural communities. This fact, coupled with the deteriorating spiritual condition of rural areas and the unique challenges of small-town communities in today's world, cries out for rural America not to be forgotten in our church planting efforts. Still, although we may want to provide some financial and other assistance to church planting efforts in these rural communities, this would not be our highest priority in terms of the allocation of our limited resources.

#### **4. Multicultural / Ethnic Churches**

The predominant model for churches today is the homogenous, monocultural kind of church plants because it is easier to reach people "like us." Most people come to Christ without crossing social, economic, and racial barriers.

There is a movement in church planting today that puts a high emphasis on developing a multicultural model. Many folks, particularly millennials, want to be a part of a multicultural church. It can be said that a multicultural church is a better reflection of the kingdom because God is calling "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" to the marriage feast of the Lamb.<sup>4</sup>

The church is called to be both a sign and an instrument of the kingdom of God. It's an instrument in the kingdom of God in that it is God's agent in the world sharing the word of Jesus to a broken and hurting world. It is also a sign in the kingdom of God - a credible witness to the kingdom - because people are supposed to look into the church and say, "That's what the kingdom of God looks like." A multicultural church is a foretaste of the family of God we will experience in eternity. Doing multicultural ministry is a gift because it gives us a glimpse of forever.

Multicultural church planting must embrace distinctness in diversity and value what each person brings to the table. We must be at a place where we value those from different background and perspectives. When we ask ourselves, "What does a multicultural church planting focus look like?" we must be prepared to approach it in a completely different manner with different expectations than the monocultural church planting effort with which we are much more familiar and comfortable.

#### **C. Core Values (*What defines us?*)**

Our Core Values represent what we hope will be evident about our mission partners and us as we participate in the movement of God's love towards all peoples.

##### **1. Church-Planting**

As described above, we believe in the missionary vocation of the church and the essential role of the church as the bearers of God's kingdom to the world. We hope we are defined in our endeavors and in our partnerships by a high-regard for Christ's bride. Therefore we are committed to being a church planting church – locally, regionally and nationally.

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<sup>4</sup> Rev. 7:9

## **2. Gospel-Centered**

The gospel shapes every aspect of life and conduct. The gospel is the good news, proclaimed throughout Scripture, of God's passionate, sacrificial love for His children. In Jesus Christ and Him crucified, there is full salvation and redemption for all who believe. This faith and trust in Jesus Christ, through the grace-filled work of the Holy Spirit, unites us to Christ, and in Him we are made new and are enabled to live for God's glory more and more. As we experience God's love in this way, we are compelled to engage those around us with Christ-like love for Jesus' sake. God's love for us motivates and fuels our love for Him, as well as our desire to participate with Him in His mission.

## **3. Missional ("self-reproducing")**

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Matt. 28:19-20. We are called by God to share the good news of the Gospel, but we are also directed to teach and disciple others. We are not always called to lead, but to create true disciples of Christ who know His love and word and can then share it with others. We are therefore committed to be involved with movements whose vision and directive is to produce disciples who are empowered to go and share the gospel within their own context.

## **4. Engaging the Culture**

God's love and grace compels us both to share the truth of the Gospel and to love our neighbor. We desire to have all of life in every sphere brought under the Lordship of Christ and therefore are committed to being a church which seeks to share the truth and beauty of the Gospel and to engage the culture from a Christ-centered and biblically rooted foundation.

## **5. Partnerships**

As a church we are committed to being in intentional relationships and partnerships with other like-minded believers and organizations. We are not "Lone Rangers" with respect to church planting. We want to work with others who share our vision and who have insights, resources, or opportunities that we, at First Presbyterian Church, do not have by ourselves. (See Ecclesiastes 4:12: "And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.") There are other ministries with whom we can partner to plant churches that we could not plant by ourselves. At the same time, we realize that with the resources that have been given to us by God, we are committed to a more focused "rifle" approach to missions instead of a scattered "shotgun" model. We will focus on specific efforts and regions, seeking to ensure that our church-planting partners are supported financially, spiritually and emotionally before seeking to add additional partners.

## 6. Flexible in Methodology.

While we must be firm and hold fast to the teaching of the Gospel, we also need to be flexible and adaptable in our methodology in order to communicate the Gospel to people where they are. As Paul expressed in 1 Cor. 9:19-23:

<sup>19</sup> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. **I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.** <sup>23</sup> I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

(emphasis added).

## 7. Twin Lakes Fellowship Talking Points.

First Presbyterian Church has previously adopted the “Twin Lakes Fellowship Talking Points,” which are “Fifteen ‘Talking Points’ for the Future (important for reformation, revitalization and church planting).” While those Talking Points are written to respond to certain trends in “the visible Church, in American culture in general and Presbyterianism in particular, including the liberalism of many mainline churches and the fact that many evangelical churches reflect the culture more than the Gospel, they do offer insights into certain ways the church can once again become distinct from the world in order to fulfill her mission.

## II. CAMPUS MINISTRY

### A. Reasons for Campus Ministry – Why College Ministry?

#### 1. The college years are formative years when many students are open to the shaping of their worldview.

For most college students, this season of life is uniquely formative. Most students are moving away from home and starting the process of trying to figure out who they are, what they believe, and what they’re going to do with their life. College students are very open to new ideas. They are just beginning to develop intellectually and many other ways. It is a time of asking “big questions” and partaking in new experiences. It is a time of being exposed to and influenced by new people and new and different ideas. They’re seeking answers to questions like, “How did I get here and why do I exist? Is there a God? Does life have a purpose? Should I be religious? Are all religions the same?” Many college students have never heard the Gospel before, but are open to investigating and understanding it. It is such an important time to plant a robust Christian faith in their hearts and in their minds. For their sake and the sake of the people their lives will influence, truthful answers must be provided, and the ultimate source of truth is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our trained campus ministers and their staff are on campus and involved in the lives of students to give answers to these questions. The need for truth and clarity on these eternal issues is greater today than ever before. Similarly, many covenant children are deepened and rooted in their faith while at college.

**2. The future leaders of society are on our campuses.** As Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as “Cru”) noted: “Reach the campus today; reach the world tomorrow.” Dr. Bright recognized that when students’ lives were changed by Jesus Christ, they would change the world around them. Virtually all of our leaders (political, business, educational, financial, medical, and legal) have passed through the college and university system. In every critical aspect of a nation’s culture, the campus is where we find the future leaders and influencers.

**3. Campus ministry educates and trains future church leaders. Campus ministry in general, and RUF in particular,** is a tremendous natural organic leadership development pipeline for the church. Students learn to follow Christ and serve Him boldly. The campus is not only the source of the next generation of business, government, and educational leaders, but it’s also where we find the next generation of church leaders and cross-cultural missionaries.

**4. Campus ministry trains and prepares future pastors and church planters.** Campus ministers and RUF staff can see what is coming in the culture because they are working with college students. They are on the cutting edge of culture, and have insights into what the country is going to be like 15 years from now. They learn evangelism. They also learn entrepreneurship because every campus ministry, to a certain extent, is unique and every campus minister has to learn what works in that particular environment. Because they are entrepreneurs, because they are evangelistic, because they see the culture coming, and because there is a natural pipeline moving from student leader to intern to campus minister, RUF offers the church an unparalleled way of developing strong entrepreneurial evangelistic pastors and leaders. Most denominations don’t have anything like it as a leadership development structure.

**5. When we reach a student, we reach a family.** Moms, dads, brothers, and sisters are often impacted by the stories from students who return home with a changed life. The New Testament pattern of church growth showed entire families turning to Christ. That hasn’t changed. One weekend home visit from a student transformed by the gospel can start a spiritual chain reaction that impacts every member of their family.

**6. The values on campus become the values in society.** The philosophy, morality, and ethics taught by professors on university campuses slowly but surely work their way into public policy, media, and education. Those ideas and values become preserved for decades through legislation, education, music, movies, literature, and media.

**7. International students impact their nations.** International students represent the top one percent of the students in their home nations. Many of these students come from nations that restrict or ban the gospel. By reaching them while they’re on our campuses and sending them home with the gospel, we can broaden the gospel’s reach in the world.

## **B. Priorities for Campus Ministry – Core Beliefs**

1. **First Priority for Campus Ministry.** We believe that our first priority is to support the campus ministry of Reformed University Ministries (“RUM” or “RUF”), the campus ministry of the Presbyterian Church in America. RUF holds to the core beliefs of historic Christianity which motivate our heart for God and love for the university. Here are some of those beliefs that make this college ministry our top priority for campus ministry:

- **Authority of Scriptures.** We believe in the full authority, sufficiency, and infallibility of the Bible. In an age of uncertainty and skepticism we affirm that the Scriptures truthfully tell us all that we need to know about Jesus and how we are called to live our lives in response to his gospel.
- **The Need.** We believe that the greatest need of every human being is for new life in Jesus Christ. Although the world makes many promises of significance and security, we affirm that knowing Jesus is our only hope for life in this world and the world to come.
- **The Mission.** We believe the mission of the church is to gather people into the new community of Christ and to help them become more like Jesus. This means we are committed to communicating the message of the gospel to all people and to strengthening the faith and life of Christians through the means God has appointed.
- **The Purpose.** The purpose of RUF is to build a community on the college campus that reaches students of divergent beliefs and doubts with the message of the gospel and equips them to love and serve Jesus and his church. As we shape our lives around the gospel we have the opportunity to participate in God’s work of changing lives, healing our world, building community, and renewing our culture. We aim to do this by pursuing the following goals:
  - **Growth in Grace.** The way in which we grow in the Christian life is the same way in which we enter it - by receiving Jesus and relying on what he has done for us by his grace. That is why we are devoted to helping one another use the means of grace God has given us to promote our growth in Christ-likeness. We affirm that deep, lasting change occurs by studying the Bible, developing a prayer life, participating in worship, and forming authentic relationships with others.
  - **Evangelism and Missions.** We believe the gospel is true, and, therefore, it cannot be kept to ourselves. We are committed to thoughtfully and respectfully communicating the gospel through the words we speak, the deeds we perform, and the community we embody so that we might give others the opportunity to discover the true story of God’s grace. And since the salvation Jesus brings is comprehensive and affects the whole person, we are committed to tangibly expressing God’s care for the world by seeking wholeness for the poor, justice for the oppressed, and restoration for creation.
  - **Fellowship and Service.** Jesus not only calls us to follow him as individuals, but also gathers us into a community in which we learn to apply the gospel to every aspect of our lives. In our relationships with one another, we strive to reflect the

countercultural values of the gospel, and as we do we provide the world around us with a glimpse of who God is and what his coming kingdom entails. In light of the fact that God calls us to himself in order to be a vehicle of blessing to others, we are committed to sacrificially serving others on our campus and in our world.

- **Biblical World and Life View.** Christianity is a way of seeing all of life. Rather than dividing the world into sacred and secular realms, we recognize that every sphere of life belongs to God and provides us with an opportunity to serve him. We aim, therefore, to discern our unique vocations within the world and to pursue them with excellence, distinctiveness, and integrity so that our university as well as our culture might experience the renewal of the gospel.
- **Ordained Campus Ministers.** RUF is a ministry of students to students which takes place under the spiritual guidance and oversight of ordained campus ministers and their staff. RUF is a great way to reach college students for Christ. RUF sends ordained campus ministers to the campus to communicate the gospel and to pastor students through their college years in order to equip them for a lifetime of ministry within the local church and world. Seminary training enables campus ministers to effectively anticipate and address the questions and challenges students face in a university setting.
- **Connection to the Local Church.** RUF seeks to instill within students a deep love for the church. To that end, RUF campus ministers maintain close relationships with local churches and often lead in worship, preach, and serve the sacraments. Campus ministers also direct students towards local churches so that they might experience a more robust community of faith during their college years. The rich diversity of the local church in terms of age, race, class, and vocation brings the even greater diversity of the worldwide church into sharp focus. Participation in RUF and a local church during the college years prepares students well for commitment and service to the church upon graduation.

2. **Other Priorities.** This is not to say that no other campus ministry should be supported by the MNA Committee, but a compelling case will need to be made to support another campus ministry, particularly if it is on the same campus as an RUF ministry and focused on the general college student. Examples of other such ministries are specialized ministries such as Christian Medical and Dental Society or Cru's International ministry on a college campus. A child of First Presbyterian Church who is involved in some other evangelical campus ministry would be another exception to the general rule that RUF is the campus ministry to be supported by our Church.

### **C. Geographic Focus for Campus Ministry**

The primary geographical focus for campus ministry is first to those colleges and universities in Mississippi, with particular emphasis given to those colleges and universities which our covenant children attend or those in the Jackson area.

A secondary focus will be support for those college campus served by sons or daughters of First Presbyterian Church regardless of the location of the college or university.

To the extent we can raise sufficient funds in our missions budget, we would like to assist in starting RUF ministries on strategic college and university campuses – centers of academic, cultural, or governmental influence, where there may be few local resources available to begin a RUF campus ministry.

### **III. EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP**

#### **A. What is the difference between discipleship and evangelism?**

For many, evangelism and discipleship are two different things. Evangelism means sharing the gospel with an unbeliever so that he or she might be saved, while discipleship means helping someone who is already a believer walk the life of faith.

Under this view, the word “evangelism” brings to mind things like handing out gospel tracts, going door-to-door in a college dorm, or creatively communicating the gospel on the streets of a foreign country, while the word “discipleship” connotes a small group Bible study, a conversation across the table with another person, or an accountability group.

In a sense though, evangelism and discipleship are not all that different. When Jesus said, “Go, and make disciples,” He meant both telling unbelievers the good news as well as helping those who already believe grow in their faith. These two activities go hand-in-hand because they are both powered by the gospel. This is illustrated by Col. 2: 6-7: “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord [*i.e.*, by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit], so walk in Him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

This is the way we are saved, the way we grow, and the way disciples are made. If we are walking with Christ to the rhythm of the gospel in our lives and talking about that with other people, we are making disciples. An unbeliever might come to understand the gospel for the first time or a believer might be reminded of the gospel and believe afresh or be encouraged in the walk of faith. Either way, we are a vessel carrying the life-changing power of the gospel and making disciples as we walk through this life.

So, we are not about *either* “evangelism” *or* “discipleship,” but rather *both* “evangelism” *and* “discipleship.” We are called to make disciples through the power of the gospel.

#### **B. Reasons for Evangelism and Discipleship**

Evangelism and discipleship are near to the heart of God. Jesus declared that he came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Following our Lord, our witness is a reflection of our vital relationship with God. Peter reminds us (1 Pet. 2:9), “you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” Peter had learned his lesson well from our Lord Jesus himself, who declared (Matt. 5:14,16), “You are the light of the world ... let your light shine.” Prior to his ascension, Jesus clarified His heart’s desire as he gave His unambiguous last will and

testament to His church: the priority to make disciples through Spirit-empowered witness (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Christian witness in the early church was spontaneous and contagious, a natural outflow of the love and passionate devotion to Jesus Christ that the believers shared in common. Their love for one another was shared, in turn, with their own surrounding communities, thus fulfilling the Lord's "new commandment" (John 13:34,35). Gospel witness was both "taught" and "caught," and "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

One of the first things that Jesus said to His would be followers was "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). Christ not only began His earthly ministry with evangelism and discipleship, but He also ended it with the command of the Great Commission. "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20). The emphasis here is that the Lord commanded us to "make disciples."

### **C. The Supporting Role of Evangelism and Discipleship Ministries**

As stated earlier, we believe that the church is the primary, God-ordained means for Christian witness in the world. For that reason, church planting is the primary goal of MNA. We believe the local church is the most effective evangelism and discipleship ministry available. Secondly, we have seen the effectiveness of Campus Ministry in building the Church.

Our support of other ministries will necessarily be limited. Priority will be given to effective ministries that provide unique support to the work of Church Planting or international missions. If a ministry is significant but does not meet our strategic focus, it may be considered for support by the Benevolence Budget of the Church instead of through the MNA budget.

### **D. Geographic Focus for Evangelism and Discipleship**

We do not have a specific geographic focus for our evangelism and discipleship ministry.

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### **Church Planting Principles / Talking Points**

We are in the midst of a transitional time for the visible Church, in American culture in general and Presbyterianism in particular. Many mainline churches around us have fallen prey to liberalism of various types, while many evangelical churches look more like the culture than the church.

We don't know what the future holds but we do know who holds the future. Our job, then, is to remain faithful to him and to his vision for the church. The church must again become distinct from the world if she is to fulfill her mission (John 13:34-35).

### **Fifteen “Talking Points” for the Future (Important for reformation, revitalization and church planting)**

This vision for the future comes right out of the Bible and right out of the past of Presbyterianism. It is consistent with the best of our historic church life and with our Christ-mandated mission. But a new generation will have to be introduced to and embrace this vision if we are to remain a living witness for Christ and grow in vitality as a body of believers.

We seek (by brotherly persuasion, helpful publication, friendly discussion, and compelling example) to build a church that will be faithful to the following commitments: expository preaching, biblical worship, biblical and confessional theology, a biblical understanding of the Gospel, a biblical understanding of conversion, a biblical understanding of evangelism, a biblical understanding of church membership, a biblical understanding of mutual accountability in the church, a biblical understanding of church government, and a biblical view of Christian discipleship – and thus a church with a shared vision of ministry.

#### **1. Expository Bible Preaching**

**2 Timothy 4:1-2** “I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **preach the word**; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

Expository Bible Preaching is not a style but a principle. It's controlling concern is to expound what Scripture says in a particular passage, carefully explaining its meaning and applying it to the congregation. It is a commitment to hear God's Word and recover the centrality of the Word in our worship. The next generation of preachers must be trained to appreciate the difference between preaching that is Bible-based and preaching that merely uses the Bible as a starting point to discuss the matter at hand.

#### **2. Biblical Worship**

**John 4:23-24** “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father **in spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship **in spirit and truth**.”

**1 Corinthians 14:33-40** (selected) “God is not *a God* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. . . . If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized. . . . But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.”

The Psalmist tells us that worship is giving unto the Lord the glory due his name (Psalm 29:1-2). But where do we find the substance of and our direction for our gathered, corporate worship? The Bible. Much that is amiss in modern worship practice would be corrected if we took for our principle of direction: “Sing the Bible, Pray the Bible, Read the Bible, Preach the Bible.” We ought to strive to be sure that all that we sing is scriptural, that our prayers are saturated with scripture, that much of the word of God is read in each public service, and that the preaching here is based on the Bible. We need churches, church plants and church planters committed to a high view of public worship. This will have to be deliberately inculcated and fostered if the generations to come are going to follow in the good way.

### **3. Inclusive Psalmody**

**Colossians 3:16** “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with **psalms** and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

We need deliberately to re-include the psalms in our worship. “Exclusive psalmody” is the view that we should only sing psalms in our congregational praise. It is a time-honored position held by many in the reformed and presbyterian tradition, and we esteem those who do so highly. However, we also believe there is ample and important biblical reason to also sing biblically sound hymns and songs of human composition (not the least of which is the biblical imperative that the redeemed praise the Redeemer for the redemption [see Psalm 98 and Revelation 5], and that explicitly and not merely implicitly and typologically). Nevertheless, the big problem in the PCA is not advocacy for exclusive psalmody but rather the practice of exclusive hymnody (or as one chap has wryly put it “exclusive chorusody”!). What is being excluded and ignored in our circles is the psalms – which are at the heart of the worship tradition of every major historical branch of Christianity. Hence, the book of Psalms, as God's divinely inspired hymnbook, should be amply and regularly sung from, along with Scripturally sound hymns in our services.

### **4. Morning and Evening Worship**

**Exodus 20:8-10** “Remember the sabbath **day**, to **keep it holy**. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God”

If we believe, with the majority of Christians in all ages (and with the Westminster Divines!), that the Old Testament Sabbath command has a weekly new covenant fulfillment in the Christian Lord's Day (and we'll argue for this under our next point), then we will believe that the **whole of that day** (following the explicit one day in seven pattern of the old covenant of grace) is to be spent in worship, deeds of mercy, necessity and witness, and rest. If that is the case, then both prudential factors and the testimony of history indicate that the best way to help the Lord's people

keep the Lord's Day (as opposed to the Lord's hour or the Lord's morning, or even the Lord's Saturday night!) is to frame the first day of the week with gathered praise: morning and evening. And such is not without Biblical precedent. Sinclair Ferguson once said to me that those who wished to do away with the Lord's Day evening service "betrayed a fundamental misunderstanding of the theology of Lord's Day experience."

### **5. A Theology of Lord's Day Experience**

**Mark 2:27-28** "Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'""

**Revelation 1:10** "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day . . . ."

We need to resuscitate a high view of the Lord's Day in our circles. We understand that there will be differences in our specific practice, but the big picture and the central message needs to be displayed and trumpeted again. As J.C. Ryle bluntly put it: "As a rule there is a general flight of steps down from 'no sabbath' to 'no God'." Protestantism cannot survive without the Lord's Day, but some of our own brethren are working for its extinction with all good intentions, and our culture is obstructing and tempting our people at every turn. We want to recapture the Spirit of M'Cheyne "A well-spent sabbath we feel to be a day of heaven upon earth . . . we love to rise early on that morning, and to sit up late, that we may have a long day with God" and Baxter "What fitter day to ascend to heaven, than that on which He arose from earth, and fully triumphed over death and hell. Use your Sabbaths as steps to glory, till you have passed them all, and are there arrived."

### **6. Family Worship**

**Deuteronomy 6:4-7** "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."

We use the designation "Family Worship" as synecdoche for the whole of family religion, and we recognize that the church today needs a revival of older principles and practice in this area too. We need to encourage family worship (including singing, Scripture reading and prayer), along with family attendance of the corporate worship of the church. The catechisms, too, are almost lost tools that would supply antidotes to many of our current problems. A sense of the strategic role of parents in the Christian nurture of their children needs to be freshly pressed home. If the prime and main focus of our promotion of spiritual life in covenant children is on Sunday School, Youth Programs, retreats and conferences, VBS, and various other special Christian Educational emphases (as wonderful and helpful as these can be), then we will neglect the plan that God himself established for the discipleship of covenant children: godly parents living, talking and teaching the faith in the home.

### **7. Biblical Theology (or Westminster Calvinism)**

**2 Timothy 1:13-14** "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you."

Have you noticed that the PCA is balkanized into sub-groups that identify themselves theologically as, respectively, “Old School,” or “Broadly Reformed,” or “TR – Truly or Thoroughly or Totally Reformed,” or “reformed with a little ‘r,’” or “Gospel-driven,” or “Sonship,” or “Liturgical Reformed,” or “Reconstructionist,” and the list goes on. Whatever happened to good old vanilla Westminster Calvinism – a warm-hearted and whole-hearted embrace of the theology, ethos and praxis of our *Confession*? One of the grand ironies of many of these sub-groups, left and right, is that they often have some significant arguments with the theology of the *Confession* that are part of the heart of their agenda (whether it is paedocommunion, baptismal regeneration, “Shepherdism” [justification by the twin instruments of faith and works], theonomy, anti-regulative principle, anti-federal theology, anti-Sabbatarianism, anti-WCF ethics and more). We need men who have a spirit of respect and energy for the *Confession*. As long as we merely acquiesce to the Standards, without personally embracing them as a compelling summary of biblical truth, a strengthening destructive diversity will continue to emerge.

### **8. Shared Vision for Evangelism/Church Planting/Missions**

**2 Timothy 4:5** “But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, **do the work of an evangelist**, fulfill your ministry.”

**1 Corinthians 1:17-18** “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

**Matthew 28:18-20** “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

**Acts 1:8** “. . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

We need a body of men who love God’s word, who embrace sound Reformed theology and who have a zeal for souls. We need men who have heard and are endeavoring to respond faithfully to Paul’s call to Timothy, who have Paul’s twin attributes of heat and light and share his energy for the work of evangelism and church establishment. Men who have as a genuine aim in their ministry the drawing in and building up of the Lord’s people in response to Jesus’ commission and promise. Bonar said “We take for granted that the object of the Christian ministry is to convert sinners and edify the body of Christ.” Durham adds: “This is the great design of all preaching, to bring them within the covenant who are without, and to make those who are within the covenant to walk suitably to it. And as these are never separated on the Lord’s side, so should they never be separated on our side.”

### **9. Ministerial Piety**

**Ephesians 3:14-19** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Piety is “the life of God in the soul of man” (to borrow Scougal’s phrase). I do not mean that true spirituality is merely soulish or disembodied, James 1-2 will correct that misunderstanding quickly, as will Romans 12:1-2. But in the Bible, true religion flows from the heart. Evangelicals used to understand that. But one does not have to be a sleuth to detect a marked deficiency of piety in the ministry of the church in our own time. We can remember giants in the land, and we feel ourselves midgets. Indeed, for some, the very word “piety” is held in great suspicion as the vestigia of a kind of pietistic revivalism that we are better off without. And yet Calvin himself viewed the *Institutes*, the *Institutes* mind you, as a “sum of piety” rather than a *summa theologia*. We need to foster personal piety in the ministry. We need to recognize our own spiritual poverty and challenge one another to strive for devotion in love to God and experience of the love of Christ.

### **10. A Biblical Understanding of the Gospel and Evangelism**

**1 Corinthians 15:1-4** “Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,”

**2 Timothy 4:5** “But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, **do the work of an evangelist**, fulfill your ministry.”

The Gospel is the heart of Christianity. Yet many today are confused about what it is! Some view the Gospel as something that makes people’s lives better (only partially true), some think the Gospel is “God loves you,” (again, only partially true), but the Biblical Gospel is that God loves sinners at the cost of his Son. Anything less than this rich, full, biblical presentation of the Gospel will produce spurious conversions. The whole truth is that we are dead in sin and in need of spiritual life, and God graciously grants that life by his Son - that is Good News! We must tell the next generation this wonderful truth and pray that they imbibe it.

How someone shares the Gospel is closely related to how he understands the Gospel. We need to be more concerned to know and teach the Gospel itself than to teach people methods and strategies to share it. Indeed, what we want our people to be excited about is the Gospel itself. Biblically, evangelism is presenting the Good News freely and trusting God to convert people. We must cultivate a Gospel-embracing and Gospel-sharing people, if we are to be faithful in the days to come.

### **11. A Biblical Understanding of the Law and Sanctification**

**Romans 3:31** “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.”

**Philippians 2:12-13** “. . . work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.”

It is essential to healthy discipleship that a Christian understand something of the ongoing role of the law in the Christian life (the third use of the law) and the grace dynamic of the Holy Spirit’s uniting of us to Christ by faith. Neither of these things should be set over against one another or de-emphasized in the balance of our instruction on Christian growth. Sanctification is both active and passive, both monergistic and (asymmetrically) synergistic, both by the standard of the law

and by the power of the Spirit, both responsive to biblical imperatives and dependent on the grand indicative of union with Christ, both inward and outward, both individual and corporate. Evangelicalism still tends to present theories of sanctification in one of two equally erroneous camps: legalism and passivism. Neither does justice to the richness of New Testament teaching on the subject. Neither is Confessionally sound. “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey” is still a good summarization of the emphases of a life that flows out of union and communion with Christ.

## **12. A Biblical Understanding of Conversion and Discipleship**

**1 Timothy 1:5** But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

The spiritual change each person needs is so radical, so near the root of us, that only God can do it. We need God to convert us. Conversion should not be equated with or stereotyped as an emotionally heated experience, but it must evidence itself by its fruit if it is to be what the Bible regards as a true conversion. Our people must have experienced such a real conversion and have started down the road of understanding it biblically if we are to be a healthy church.

A pervasive concern with church growth exists today - not simply with growing numbers, but with growing members. Though many Christians measure other things, the only certain observable sign of growth is a life of increasing holiness, rooted in Christian self-denial. These concepts are nearly extinct in the modern church. Recovered for today, true discipleship would build the church and promote a clearer witness to the world. But again, this radical concept must be taught and propagated to another generation if a vital church life is to flourish in PCA churches in the third millennium.

## **13. A Biblical Understanding of Church Membership and Discipline**

**Hebrews 13:17** “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

**Matthew 28:19-20** (selected) “Go therefore and make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you . . .”

**Acts 2:42-45** “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

Membership must be the reflection of a living commitment to a local church in attendance, giving, prayer and service or it is worthless. To be a member is knowingly to be traveling together as aliens and strangers in this world as we head to our heavenly home. But we live and minister in a day of unparalleled lack of commitment, so we must restore a high view of what it means to be a church member.

When we are united to Christ by faith, we are united to all who are united to Christ by faith. This mutual accountability is visibly manifested in the way we care for, look after, encourage and challenge one another to the life of godliness in the local church. The whole church has an interest in the spiritual health of every individual member. Especially church officers, and especially elders

as shepherds should seek to promote true Christian discipleship and mutual accountability among the flock. We should long to be a godly and close Spiritual family in the PCA, but this will not happen unless we work at it.

#### **14. A Biblical Understanding of Church Government**

**Ephesians 4:8-13** (selected) “ . . . ”WHEN HE [Christ] ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.” . . . And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Luke and Paul both thought church government mattered. Luke, three times in the book of Acts, connects biblical church government and discipline with church growth and health. Paul tells us that Jesus gave officers (and therefore church government) to the church as a gift necessary for our edification. Yet many are indifferent to the matter of church government and order. We need unapologetic presbyterians planting churches and training officers, if we are going to see church health and growth the way the New Testament anticipates. But we live in a place and time that doesn't know or care much about church government. Furthermore, most of our members are totally unfamiliar with historic presbyterian polity. We ignore commitment in this area at our peril.

#### **15. A Reformed Worldview**

**Acts 17:28** “. . . in Him we live and move and exist . . . ”

**2 Corinthians 10:5** “*We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,”

**2 Peter 3:15** “. . . sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”

We need ministers and members who think Christianly about all of life. Unfortunately, many who talk about worldview today are fuzzy about what its contents might be. The following sorts of elements are essential components to an authentically Reformed worldview: an unequivocal commitment to the authority of Scripture (including affirmation of the biblical concept of revelation, and of inspiration, inerrancy, authority, perspicuity, and sufficiency); the sovereign, Triune God as creator and providential ruler of the World (including affirmation of the creator/creature distinction, implications of the doctrine of the Trinity all the loci of theology, especially philosophical theology, theology proper, Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology, special creation, God's continuing involvement with His creation, a Theocentric perspective on all life, space and time, non-neutrality, Kingdom of God); the historical reality of the Fall and the sinfulness of man (including affirmation of the noetic effects of sin, the reality of Satan and the forces of evil, and mankind's need for reconciliation and redemption); the sovereign Grace of God in salvation (including affirmation of the priority and supremacy of Grace in redemption, consequent humility and gratitude of the redeemed, and resultant assurance of salvation); and the nature of the Church (including affirmation of its unity and diversity, and visibility and invisibility).

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