

# The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church

## Vision 2025

### Credo

Expressing God's Love, Engaging in God's Justice

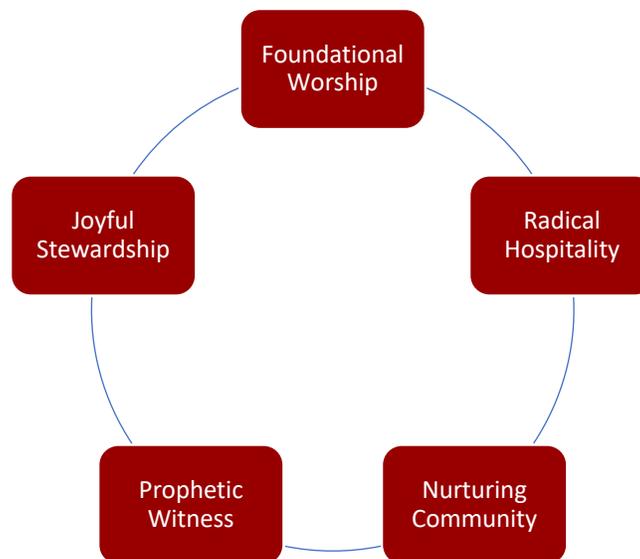
### Vision

Following Christ into places of brokenness and joy, NYAPC will do justice, treat all with kindness and mercy, and walk humbly with God.

### Mission

NYAPC is a community of faith in the heart of Washington DC, furthering God's transforming work, challenging the powerful, standing with the oppressed, lifting up the broken-hearted, and making God's love and justice visible by welcoming and loving all.

### Core Values



**Foundational Worship:** We gather to praise God, just as we are, amidst the brokenness of the world, seeking to be transformed by the Word and inspired by the Spirit to bear God's love and justice.

**Radical Hospitality:** We offer God's inclusive welcome, inspired by Jesus' ministry and empowered by God's Spirit to provide all a safe place and a spiritual home.

**Nurturing Community:** We care for one another as God cares for us: growing in our faith, nurturing deep, lasting friendships, feeding each other's spirits and reaching out to neighbors near and far.

**Prophetic Witness:** We seek to be faithful to the justice-seeking God by witnessing against all that deforms God's good creation, so that we might be where God is, at work bringing new life.

**Joyful Stewardship:** We nourish and share our gifts from God's abundance so that we may move boldly forward in our common journey of faith.

## Introduction

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*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? - Micah 6:8*

The Vision/Strategy Task Force began work in June 2018, developing vision and mission statements for our congregation, with an eye toward writing a Strategic Plan. The attached is the result of our labor: The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church's vision, mission and core values, adopted by Session in March 2019, and our initial proposed goals and strategies for implementing that vision between now and 2025.

**Background.** We started with a blank page, but with the words from Micah 6:8, which hang on the banners outside our church, echoing in our heads. We began our work with Bible study, discerning “gospel values” through stories from the gospels. We also completed a “graced history” exercise, telling stories of good times, bad times, and the times God brought good out of the bad in our congregation's history. In addition, we pushed ourselves to discover the “why” behind stories of when we've felt most proud of our congregation. If a story told of how NYAPC showed up during the hardest of times, we then added a “so that” to the statement: NYAPC showed up during the hardest of times so that \_\_\_\_\_. Our “so that's” were always about God, about doing God's work, about sharing God's love.

Throughout our process we solicited and responded to feedback from all four boards and the congregation at large on Congregational Sundays, from Sunday School classes, and from one-on-one conversations. Some of the feedback included:

- Does our Vision and Mission differentiate us from “the church down the street?” We decided that we had to be true to our own discernment, though we trust that by doing that, we will indeed express our unique identity.
- How will the plan not “gather dust on a shelf?” A subgroup of the Planning Task Force is working on methods and tools for implementation.
- Will this plan help us make financial decisions? One of our initial three primary goals centers on stewardship and finances.

**Sustainability and Stewardship.** Perhaps one of the biggest issues we wrestled with on several occasions was whether the word “sustainability” should be part of our mission, our values, or our goals. We discovered early in our process that the PCUSA Book of Order addresses this issue: “The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life” (Book of Order, F-1.0301). Later, when undertaking the “so that” exercise referenced above, we discovered that our “why” must be about more than sustainability. And when developing our core values, we considered “Sustainable Stewardship” but decided that “Joyful Stewardship” was the value we wanted our congregation to embrace.

In the end, the question we want this strategic plan to help us answer is not “how do we survive?” but rather “how do we make God's love and justice visible?” Still, as this plan reflects, responsible stewardship of the many gifts this church has been given remains important. One of our core values is “Joyful Stewardship” because we want to act from a position of abundance, not scarcity; however, joyful does not mean irresponsible, and we worked hard on developing a goal and strategies that will help us be both joyful and responsible stewards of our resources.

**Responding to You.** The goals we propose also respond to issues raised by the 2017 Church Assessment Tool (CAT) survey. Unlike other congregations who have taken the CAT, our congregation was unusually concerned about financial issues. In addition, while the results of the evaluation were positive overall, we ranked poorly against other churches in the area of “Spiritual Vitality,” a measure that often correlates to financial health. Two of our goals address both these concerns.

The third goal we propose relates to how we organize ourselves. This seems both appropriate and necessary during our time of transition after Rev. Roger Gench’s retirement.

**A “Living Document.”** We envision this plan as a “living document,” guiding us over the next five years. Our initial three goals are not meant to be comprehensive. Instead, we limited these goals to three in order to focus our congregation on important issues that are in front of us right now and to provide a “transitional map” as we move toward more fully living out our mission. Other aspects of our life together, big and small, remain important, for example:

- the continued growth of our Children and Youth program;
- how we navigate our relationship with the BID Homeless Services Center; and
- how we nurture one another.

After we make progress on the three goals proposed in this plan, the Session might add a new goal related to our Children and Youth, to our social mission programs, or another aspect of our congregational life.

In fact, this plan will succeed only if we revise it in response to new learning and new ideas.

We present the following goals and strategies in the context of what PCUSA’s NextChurch calls Cultivated Ministry. This is a dynamic process of assessment, evaluation, and revision, accomplished through storytelling, learning, and mutual accountability, all done within our theological context: the Mission and Vision of NYAPC. Our implementation plan will address significant ways we can make this plan and subsequent assessment and revision part of our church culture.

Micah and the other prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures spoke to times of change, to times of disaster, to times of exile and return. We hope The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church won’t face the dramatic disruption that the ancient Israelites did, but we also hope that this plan will help us make room for the new in our midst, as we work together to express God’s love and engage in God’s justice

*- Miriam Dewhurst, Paul Dornan, Meg Hanna House, Hal Hiemstra, Sarah McGinnis, Olivia Singelmann, Edie Snyder, Jim Spearman, Rev. Alice Tewell, Matt Wieseler*

## Goal #1

### Cultivate deeper faith within our individual lives and within the faith community

- Provide opportunities and encourage members and friends to discuss, express, contemplate, and question their faith.
  - Provide practical hands-on training to all mission and committee leaders on how to frame each gathering or meeting in faith language and practice. This includes officer training and would set standards on how to run a meeting within a theological context and this strategic plan. *When: January 2020 leadership training, church board and committee meetings, ongoing*
  - Develop adult education classes that focus on guiding and empowering members of NYAPC to talk about our faith within and outside our faith community. *When: by fall 2020*
  - Develop and execute an NYAPC strategy, led by the pastors, to use e-mail, the website, social and other media to bolster our work to cultivate deeper faith individually and in community. *When: Measurable progress in 2020*
- Explore and evaluate different approaches to worship to increase energy and participation.
  - Conduct a congregation-wide assessment (for example, listening sessions, a suggestion box, a survey, roundtable discussions) of the current worship and music program's strengths and weaknesses. *When: first assessment by May 2020 and annually thereafter*
  - Encourage our Transitional Pastor, in response to the assessment and in consultation with the Worship and Music Committee, to vary the status quo in terms of liturgy, music, etc. *When: Measurable progress by May 2020*
  - Explore ways our music program can cultivate deeper faith. This exploration might include increasing the diversity of ages and genres in the music ministry, further supporting children and youth music financially and otherwise, as well as developing ways for the entire congregation to become more involved in the music ministry of the church. *When: by June 2020*
  - Redesign and update the bulletin to focus on worship. *When: asap, but no later than September 2020*

## GOAL #2

### Broaden our understanding and practice of stewardship

- Finances
  - Building on the work of the Accounting Task Force, increase clarity and congregational understanding of the church's finances through quarterly, easy-to-read, narrative financial summaries that are accessible to the entire congregation and inform decisions on how we steward our resources. Develop a template to tell the story of our finances and review these quarterly summaries annually for their effectiveness. *When: 2020-2021*

## NYAPC Strategic Planning Goals and Implementation Proposal

- Outside the fall budget cycle, engage in conversations about long-term use of and strategies for restricted and non-restricted funds, according to the goals of this plan. Be open to flexibility in the use of these resources, depending on current needs while respecting legal stipulations. *When: 2021 - each spring once bullet #1 is completed*
- Work with financial committees to provide feedback on implementation of this plan's reporting and budget recommendations. *When: at least annually.*
- Ensure that the fall annual budget process is based on a clear narrative and understanding of our financial resources. *When 2021 and beyond*
- Build on recent stewardship drives by providing resources (people, education, money) to execute best practices during the pledge drive and year-round. *When: 2020 and beyond*
- Annually identify and pursue one new opportunity to diversify church revenue beyond membership giving, endowment income, and rental income, such as pursuing foundation grants and developing new partnerships or "Friends of NYAPC" initiatives. *When: 2021 and beyond*
- Church:
  - Provide quarterly opportunities in worship to members and friends for self-reflection on the practice of stewardship. *When 2020 and beyond*
  - Celebrate the many ways in which members and friends participate in the life of NYAPC and live out our vision and mission. *When: at least annually by the time officers are nominated each year*
  - Determine how we might reduce our collective and individual environmental footprints by engaging in an audit. *When: 2021*
  - Map patterns of congregational volunteering to better understand needs and opportunities. *When: June 2020*

### GOAL #3

#### Optimize the effectiveness of our leadership/staff structures and programs/ministries

- Optimize our organizational structure.
  - Evaluate our board and committee structures and sizes and reorganize them as needed. *When: 2020*
    - Develop short, easy-to-remember "purpose" statements for each board and committee, referencing the church's mission and core values.
    - Work with all boards to examine and perhaps reshape the focus of their ministries, considering how that emphasis fits into the church's organizational structure.
  - Examine term limits for lay leadership positions for all four boards and their committees. Enforce term limits within the bylaws and PCUSA polity. *When: 2020*

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- Map out the main activities of our congregation, then assess, and, if necessary, reorganize lay leadership to align with and support these activities. *When: 2020*
- Focus on and possibly restructure NYAPC programs to align with our newly adopted mission to make space for new ideas and efforts. *When: 2021*
  - Develop/update profiles of our outreach ministries, highlighting how they align or could best align with our mission and core values.
- Working with the Transitional Pastor, deputy head of staff, and personnel committee, examine how best to align staff strengths with church needs. *When: 2020*
- Optimize our organizational process.
  - Provide the level of staff support and training necessary to meet the demands of day-to-day work in our building, especially in view of the new Downtown Day Center. *When: 2020 with annual assessments.*
  - Annually solicit feedback from all boards and committees about our structures and processes, using a “what’s working, what needs improvement” model and making adjustments, as necessary, considering the church vision and mission. *When, 2021 and annually thereafter.*
  - Examine how we schedule board and committee meetings, seeking opportunities for fellowship among these leadership groups. *When: February 2020*
- Develop a comprehensive communication plan.
  - Include communications imperatives embedded in goals #1 and 2 regarding cultivating faith and understanding finances. *When: 2021*
  - Facilitate communication among boards and committees by publishing quarterly reports in AveNews and other outlets, such as the website. *When: quarterly beginning in 2020*
  - Investigate and adopt best practices in communications and outreach already implemented by other churches. *When: 2021*
  - Complete a community exegesis (road map study) of those who live and work in the blocks surrounding us. *When: 2022*

