

**Redmond Presbyterian Church
Vision & Mission
A Process of Spiritual Discernment**

May 26, 2016

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1. Summary

In the summer of 2015, our pastor announced that he would retire in January 2017. Given the length of time between his announcement and his retirement date, the Session, with authorization from the Seattle Presbytery Committee on Ministry, decided to pursue a new approach to mission study and pastor search. We have previously followed the traditional route of working with an interim pastor and decided the new approach would be suitable for our church. This process was possible due to the pastor's advanced notice and a healthy, functioning church.

In general, the new approach includes:

- Selection of a Transition Team to oversee Spiritual Discernment
- Meetings with the Committee on Ministry representative
- Obtaining and evaluating demographics for our area
- All-church Spiritual Discernment
- Documentation of the process and results

The goal of this process was to prayerfully discern what God wants us to be and do at Redmond Presbyterian Church and within the Community.

We began with a demographic study to define the area we serve. The findings allowed us to compare our church demographics with the greater community demographics and to decide if the greater community demographics led us to change or adjust the vision for RPC. In the end, we concluded that God was not calling us to do something different. We feel called to continue with our mission rather than cater to a general or specific demographic in our community.

This was followed by a process of spiritual discernment led by Renewal Ministries Northwest (RM). RM led us in discovering our strengths and unique gifting as a church. We surveyed the congregation and were led through four spiritual discernment gatherings by RM.

The first two sessions culminated with development of a guiding question for RPC:

Lord, given our love and devotion to Christ, our highly relational church family, and our passion for serving the community and one another, what are you calling RPC to focus on here and now?

With prayerful discernment and discussion over the final two sessions, we were able to identify how our relationships at RPC are central to who we are and what we offer the community at large. At our final gathering we developed a goal to create and sustain relationships with a purpose for loving God and one another. This was encapsulated into a simple statement:

Relationships with a Purpose: Loving God and Loving One Another

The remainder of this document summarizes the process in greater detail and provides more information for those interested in the details of the new process. Following acceptance of this

document, the information will be passed on to the Pastor Nominating Committee for use in the next steps toward finding a new pastor.

It is important to note that our current pastor was not involved in this process or the events in any manner. The Committee on Ministry and our Transition Team both concluded that the process should be conducted independently of the current pastor's thoughts and ideas.

2. Organization and Schedule

The Transition Team included:

Jessica Ahnert, Joclyn Coats, Ron Dorn, Craig Fetters, Bonnie Foti, Dan Weinmeister, Jane Wickert and Jim Crim (temp).

Corporately we spent over 30 hours planning, learning and praying, and privately many additional hours in prayer and contemplation with God. Each of our ‘Team’ meetings were held at RPC. Kevin Nollette, Seattle Presbytery representative from the Committee on Ministry, opened each meeting with prayer and a reminder that we were together to prayerfully discern what God is calling us to be and to do at Redmond Presbyterian Church and in the Community.

With approval from Session, we entered into a contract with Rev. Denise Easter and Rev. Dianna Kunce from Renewal Ministries Northwest who provided us with a four phase series designed to guide us through the process of “Praying the Jesus Way” while “Seeking God in the Midst of Transition.”

We initially worked out a schedule of meeting dates for the four Saturday sessions with Renewal Ministries as well as the details of what we would need at these sessions such as materials, beverages and snacks. Via email we developed announcements for the Sunday bulletin, the semi-monthly newsletter, the weekly email reminder and in-person messages to both Sunday morning services. One or two members of the Team attended meetings of the Session each month to keep them informed of our progress.

Team Meetings: Average 90 minutes each = 10.5 hours

Monday, November 2, 2015
Monday, December 7, 2015
Monday, February 8, 2016
Monday, March 14, 2016
Thursday, April 21, 2016
Wednesday, May 11, 2016
Thursday, May 26, 2016

Spiritual Discernment with Renewal Ministries Northwest: Total 19.5 hours

Phase I	January 16, 2016 (8:30-1:30)	5.0 hours
Phase II	February 27, 2016 (8:30-1:30)	5.0 hours
Phase III	March 19, 2016 (8:30-1:30)	5.0 hours
Phase IV	April 23, 2016 (8:30-1:00)	4.5 hours

3. Our Process

In November the ‘Team’ met for the first time. Kevin initiated our discussion with an overview of the intent of forming this Transition Team. Kevin directed that our goal was to concern ourselves with ‘adaptive’ vs. ‘technical’ change. In other words, we were instructed to consider the ‘big picture’ of who we are as Christians and to pray about where and what God wants us to do now and moving forward both within our RPC congregation and the community. We defined our demographic study area and Kevin ordered a Ministry Area Profile “Compass” report from Percept Group; providing statistics about our defined study area with regard to ‘People and Place’, ‘Community Issues’, ‘Diversity’ and ‘Faith Preferences’.

At our December meeting we reviewed the results of the demographic information provided and discussed preparations for the first meeting with Renewal Ministries in January.

- **Phase I:** This session was designed to include the congregation and leaders of RPC. We were guided in the practices of listening to God in prayer with methods and scripture chosen to speak to us during this time of transition.

Prior to the Phase II session, *Appreciative Inquiry* forms were made available to small groups at RPC and to the congregation individually. Renewal Ministries presented the *Appreciative Inquiry* form with the purpose of each of us honestly and prayerfully assessing the strengths and gifts God has given us here at RPC and acknowledging our history and what is good and is working well within Redmond Presbyterian Church. Several groups responded as well as many individuals.

- **Phase II:** Following a summary of the *Appreciative Inquiry* process, those attending formulated a question to assist us in our process of discernment.
- **Phase III:** We prayed about the question and broke into several small groups to share what we felt we had received from God over the past few days and weeks. Coming back together we distilled all of this down to *‘What’* our Lord is saying to us.
- **Phase IV:** The final session with Renewal Ministries was designed to review the results of the discernment process of the congregation, continue praying and listening for God’s word, and distill and clarify what God has said. We began working on the next steps of *‘How’* to create opportunities within our church family to move toward where God wants us to be.

4. The Demographic Study

The community we serve in addition to being a suburb of Seattle also is the home of Microsoft and other technology and manufacturing companies. Population of our study area is 178,478 representing an increase of 36,844 (26%) since 2000. From 2016 to 2021 population growth is estimated to increase by 7.5% or over 13,412 people. This is twice the rate of population growth in the U.S. 75% of the population resides in approximately 50% of the geographical area.

Diversity is extremely high based upon the number of different lifestyle and racial/ethnic groups. Of the six major segment groupings, the largest is Affluent Families which accounts for 58% of the households in the area. Anglos represent 64.6% of the population and all other ethnic groups 35.4% (national average 39%). The largest of these groups, Asians, accounts for 22.1% and are projected to be the fastest growing group increasing by 23.6% between 2016 and 2021. The most significant generational group is Survivors (ages 35-55) at 30.6% of total population (national average 27.3%).

Family structures are very traditional due to the above average presence of married persons and two-parent families. The overall education level is somewhat high (95.6% have completed high school (national average 86.4%) and 59% are college graduates (national average 29.4%). Overall, community stress levels are very low.

Overall the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is very low compared to national averages (This is true in much of the Pacific NW). 76.7% of the households are likely to express a preference for some particular religious tradition or affiliation, well below the national average of 85.1%. Based upon likely worship, music, and architectural style preferences in the area, the overall church style preference can be described as somewhat contemporary.

The data was confirming in that we didn't see anything that really surprised us. We are a growing, highly intelligent, well-educated, ethnically diverse community. Some of our conclusions include:

- Our congregation aligns with the statistics in some ways – intelligent and well-educated.
- We are not ethnically diverse although we welcome everyone who wants to be a part of who we are.
- We do not have opportunities for all age groups.
- We do offer a highly-relational, Christian family for those who have been displaced, because of career opportunities.
- While entertainment opportunities appeal to some, others are looking for a smaller, more intimate Church family. RPC is that Church and we need to be really good at what we do best.

5. Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry forms were made available to small groups at RPC and to the congregation individually. Renewal Ministries presented the *Appreciative Inquiry* form with the purpose of each of us honestly and prayerfully assessing the strengths and gifts God has given us here at RPC and acknowledging our history and what is good and is working well within Redmond Presbyterian Church. Several groups responded as well as many individuals.

Questions on the *Appreciative Inquiry*:

1. What do I believe that we as a congregation value most?
2. What is distinctive about us? What sets us apart? How have we been uniquely gifted?
3. How has God resourced us?
4. What is right about who we are and what we do at RPC?
5. What has gone well for us over the years? What have we done well? What are our strengths?

What we learned from the congregation's responses to the *Appreciative Inquiry*:

The responses fell into three main groups. We listed those responses according to the number of times each was mentioned.

- Tier 1: Overwhelmingly mentioned
 - Our strong relationships and service to one another
 - Our service to community
- Tier 2: Significant number of responses
 - The Pastor
 - Programs for our children and youth
 - Contemporary music
 - Focus on God and faith (Worship)
- Tier 3: Fewer mentions
 - Our campus (Setting)
 - Spiritual growth
 - Our generational diversity and multigenerational congregation
 - Traditional music

6. Spiritual Discernment

In Phase I we were introduced to an intentional process of reading, understanding, and praying through scripture as a way of discovering how God is engaging with us at RPC. At the end of Phase I we were asked to pray: *What does God want us to be and do at Redmond Presbyterian Church and within the Community?* We spent the next several weeks in private prayer, talking to God, each reflecting on this question.

During Phase II, we used the results of the *Appreciative Inquiry* and our observations about the demographic study to develop the following question for communal spiritual discernment:

Lord, given our love and devotion to Christ, our highly relational church family, and our passion for serving the community and one another, what are you calling RPC to focus on here and now?

In Phase III, we distilled what we had each heard God say and, with the guidance of Denise and Dianna from Renewal Ministries, began to trust that we were truly receiving the Word of God in answer to our prayers. We came to acknowledge and believe that our Lord knows who we are, honors our history of developing strong relationships, and wants to use our many God-given gifts to achieve His purpose for us. The following is what we believe the Lord has given to us as His desire for RPC now and moving forward:

- Bring My People Together – opportunities to grow in Christ-centered relationships beyond Sunday morning; not just about growing in numbers, but growing into a highly relational community
- Counteract Hiding in Plain Sight – making the most of our location and our gifts rather than staying hidden in the trees
- Growing in Our Faith and Meaningful Christian Relationships – focus on strengthening our relationships with God and one another

Based on the *Appreciative Inquiry* and our group's prayerful discernment, we recognize our God-given gift is that we are a highly relational community, devoted to Christ and one another. We are compassionate and respond to those in need within our church and through our service to the community outside the congregation.

This became our springboard for moving to the Phase IV of discernment.

We shared how the process of spiritual discernment made us feel...

- Hopeful
- That this process of discernment is a memorial to the Lord and that it is good and important work.
- That God is calling us to do His work; it's not on our shoulders to come up with resources and ideas, we need to tap into what God is already doing and calling us to be.
- God will accomplish what He wants to accomplish.
- We can relax in the process and have faith in God's involvement and leadership.
- Faith that God has already chosen the pastor who will lead us into the future and that this process is about us finding that person.

We discussed the reality that not everyone will be in agreement. Each of us reflected on the question and shared with the group, "*Is this what I believe our Lord is saying to us as a group?*"

The following are the four levels of agreement, as presented to us by Renewal Ministries, and our results.

1. *I agree unequivocally that this is what our Lord is saying to us. (most)*
2. *I agree, yet with some reservation. I believe the Spirit of Christ has spoken to the group collectively. I accept and support this direction.*
3. *I believe this is the direction the Spirit of Christ is leading us together, even though I have a lot of reservation and may differ in my opinion. Regardless, I accept the collective discernment of the group. (one)*
4. *I am not able to agree or accept that we are in unity on what we are discerning. We need to remain in a posture of holy indifference and listen to God about our questions. We will be faithful in prayer until together we have assurance about what we are hearing from our Lord.*

We feel confident that we have truly listened to God, received direction from Him, and that the future of RPC is in His hands. We finished our last session with a discussion of ‘How’ to achieve the ‘What’ that God is calling us to be and do. Prayerfully, and equipped with all of the insights of our time together, we were in agreement that we needed to develop opportunities to build relationships.

7. What God Has Called RPC to Be and Do

After going through this discernment process we believe this is what God is calling RPC to be...

- God calls us to be honest about and true to who we are. We have always been the “Little Church on the Hill” and we need to be true to that history. We are a small but powerful community of believers who value substance over style and who center ourselves upon relationships.
- God calls us to be passionate, compassionate, and welcoming to all. God wants us to be a congregation that allows for diverse interests and opinions.
- God calls Redmond Presbyterian Church to be accepting and non-threatening, focused on being a highly relational church family, devoted to Christ and to one another.

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 2:4-5

What God calls us to do...

- God calls us to Shine Our Light! To counteract hiding in plain sight by making the most of our location and our gifts rather than staying hidden in the trees.
“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand and

it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16

- God calls us to be welcoming and to bring His people together. He calls us to create opportunities to grow in Christ-centered relationships beyond Sunday morning. This is not about growing in numbers but about growing into a highly relational community.
“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness.”
Matthew 6:22-23
- God calls us to respond to those in need through our relationships and service to one another within our congregation as well as to the larger community outside our church. God calls us to be a people who create and nurture **Relationships with a Purpose, Loving God and Loving One Another.**

8. How God Wants Us to Move Forward

God wants us to create opportunities to develop relationships with a purpose. These opportunities should focus on being:

- **Intentional** – focus on the audience and the impact on other commissions
- **Organic** – encourage enthusiasm and empower members to use their gifts
- **Simple** – keep structure simple and recognize busy schedules
- **Tangible** – give visitors a physical reminder of the people they met at RPC
- **Purposeful** – nurture and strengthen relationships with God and others
- **Collaborative** –work together with commissions and church groups

Relationships with a Purpose, Loving God and Loving One Another

9. General Thoughts on the Overall Process

Through this process we learned and shared many thoughts, feeling and messages from God with one another. These are some of the things we learned:

- We're all in a different place on our faith journey and it's ok. It's a journey of faith in believing that the Lord is working in our midst and anxious to show us His way if we take time to pray and listen for His words.
- It's difficult to fully explain and engage others in this process.
- During a normal busy day, it is hard for many of us to take time to be quiet with the Lord and listen for His word.
- We all felt the presence of the Lord in our midst when engaged in the prayer sessions with Renewal Ministries and experienced how amazing it feels when in communal spiritual discernment, individuals and small groups all asking the same question of our Lord, received remarkably similar answers.
- The Lord is speaking to us.
- There will be varying viewpoints within the session, the congregation, and potentially from the pastor. We received helpful tools for navigating through these situations. We have confidence that we did this work and discernment together.
- This process is supposed to be about 'adaptive change' not 'technical change' and that, for many of us, it is difficult to focus on the big picture instead of the small changes but that it's easier to focus on the big picture when we know what God is calling us to be and do.
- **Growing in our faith is our focus, rather than growing our numbers. This was a strong message from God.**
- It is important to open our hearts and minds to God's purposes for us and to act on what God's will is for us; letting go of our ideal view of what we think we should be and do. We know we don't have all the answers and need to be open to listening for and following God's will. The most important thing we can do is be honest about who we are – not what we want to be or think we should be.
- **Knowing who we are allows us to be honest when presenting our church family in the search for a pastor who will lead us in the direction God wants us to go and assessing if a candidate is a good fit.**
- There are processes and strategies that will be valuable in further discussions.
- It's somewhat difficult to go through this process with the pastor still present and equally difficult for the pastor to stay out of the process.

10. Mission Information Form – Narrative Questions: Draft Responses

The results of the process described above are communicated to prospective pastors through the Presbyterian Church – Church Leadership Connection (CLC). RPC will do this via submittal of a Mission Information Form (MIF). Contained within the MIF are five narrative questions. The responses to these five questions are the initial means through which RPC will express specific preferences for pastor candidates. Draft responses to the five narrative questions have been prepared by the Transition Team. The five draft responses are as follows:

1. *What is the congregation's or organization's vision for ministry? Additionally, describe how this vision is lived out.*

Our vision for RPC is: **Relationships with a Purpose: Loving God and One Another**

Within our congregation, we live out this vision by building loving, God-centered relationships. This is evident in our bible studies where members grow in their understanding of God and how He is presently at work, and when we come together to support people in our congregation facing life challenges, by surrounding them with love and care, and providing meals and transportation. We build relationships between young and old through special events, our Sunday School program, campus work parties, family retreats, and all-church dinners.

In our community, we build relationships through regular service with local organizations such as Mary's Place, Hopelink, YWCA Family Village, and homeless shelters in our region. We reach globally through participation in Operation Christmas Child and in support of Ten Thousand Villages, a global fair trade movement. Over the years we have built relationships with the people we serve. One such example is The Mary's Place Choir, which comes to our church each spring to lead us in song and share a meal.

These experiences strengthen the RPC family and allow us to serve with purpose and share God's love. These purposeful relationships are what makes us a loving body of Christ. By connecting with one another, we are inspired and supported to reach beyond our walls to the community around us.

2. *How do you feel called to reach out to address the emerging needs of your community or constituency?*

People need meaningful, personal relationships. In light of today's fast-paced world and reliance on technology, these personal relationships are more important than ever. We at RPC focus on our relationships with God and one another.

"Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand – shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt others to open up with God." Matthew 5:14-16 (MSG)

These inspiring words from Matthew reflect the ways in which we want to reach out and meet the emerging needs of our congregation and our community. Our vision at RPC is to create Relationships with a Purpose – to grow in Christ-centered relationships and shine God’s light. These Relationships are intentional, organic, simple, tangible, purposeful, and collaborative. The Purpose is for each relationship to foster a deeper connection with God and each other.

Currently, we are known as the “church on the hill that feeds people”. We provide meals for a men’s shelter and Mary’s Place, a shelter for homeless women, children and families in emergency situations. We provide facilities for use by a local Boy Scout troop and support a YWCA Family Village located nearby. During the Christmas season we fill shoeboxes with toiletries and gifts to send to needy children through Operation Christmas Child. Many members of our church congregation come from Emerald Heights, a local retirement community. We are blessed with a multi-generational congregation of people that love God and love one another.

3. *How will this position help you to reach your vision and mission goals?*

The pastor will help us reach God’s calling for us by:

- Providing leadership and setting an example for building and growing new and existing relationships
- Effectively and efficiently managing all administrative duties, including the RPC calendar and church staff
- Nurturing our sense of family and our relationships in the RPC community
- Empowering church members and leaders through his/her leadership and support
- Initiating and participating in fellowship, studies, and reflection to grow relationships with God and one another
- Promoting ministries of service beyond our walls, to those in the community
- Giving thoughtful and meaningful sermons that inspire and encourage the congregation
- Listening and communicating well, particularly with those accustomed to electronic interaction
- Embracing a variety of worship styles
- Fostering collaboration between groups and generations

4. *Provide a description of the characteristics needed by the person who is open to being called to this congregation and/or organization.*

These characteristics will support and foster the primary vision of RPC: **Relationships with a Purpose, Loving God and Loving One Another**

Of greatest importance:

- Filled with love and grace
- Exemplifies and supports relationship building behavior and activities

- Projects the identity of RPC in worship, to guests, and in the community
- Relevant and inspiring worship leader that relays God's message clearly and concisely
- Enjoys people, accepts all, and builds relationships
- Embraces commitment, support, and service to those in need in our greater community
- Provides compassionate pastoral care with counselling and prayer
- Collaborative leadership; welcomes and supports the gifts, skills, and ideas of others and provides leadership when needed
- Mediates and counsels to foster consensus and focus on loving God and loving one another

Other characteristics highly valued as a solo pastor:

- Positive attitude; solution oriented
- Possesses a good sense of humor that enhances relationships
- Embraces members at all stages of their faith journey
- Relates well with children and youth
- Values traditions and introduces and embraces new ones
- Sermons that connect scripture with day to day issues
- Sermons with intellectual understanding of scripture
- Reflective about their craft and welcomes feedback and suggestions

5. *For what specific tasks, assignments, and programs areas will this person have responsibility?*

The pastor's responsibilities would include, but not be limited to: planning, leading and facilitating worship services on Sundays and church holidays; moderating session and congregational meetings; presiding over baptisms, communion and memorial services; hospital and home visits for congregants in need; connecting with the retirement community Emerald Heights (where many members live); leading and facilitating staff members to work with one another in planning and executing tasks; connecting with children and youth on a regular basis through children's stories or other opportunities; coordinating with administrative assistant regarding scheduling events and all-church communications (newsletters, emails, etc.); and, equipping elected session leaders and deacons to work together toward our church's vision.

Additionally, we are seeking a loving and compassionate pastor who can:

- Support and inspire our desire to be relational with God and one another
- Nurture and foster the gifts within the church
- Help us discover and grow in our passion for Christ
- Equip us to explore ways to use our gifts