

Mission Study Report

Western Presbyterian Church; Palmyra, N.Y.

August 16, 2015



**101 East Main Street
Palmyra, N.Y. 14522
315-597-9171**

Faith In Discernment

As we move forward toward the demanding process of calling the next Pastor of Western Presbyterian Church, we trust that our thoughts and actions will be guided by the Holy Spirit and that every decision will be made with the intent to promote and glorify Jesus Christ our Lord. In faith we pray that the Holy Spirit will empower our deliberations to discern all that is best for the congregation, local community, and worldwide constituents of Western Presbyterian Church to the perpetual glory of God.

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I. Introduction-Purpose of this document

Since 2008, Session has been engaged in an ongoing strategic planning effort facilitated by the Ad Council of Rochester under the guidance of our previous pastor, Rev. Dr. Nancy J. Farrell. The Ad Council is a community-based service organization that partners with nonprofits to facilitate awareness and branding of the organization. Work included Session retreats to focus on WPC's Vision. In July 2010 Session generated a position statement and our current animated morphing logo visible on the church website.

Subsequent work with the Ad Council included a Strategic Roundtable and a Brand Development Workshop in 2011. The Ad Council's "Customer Touchpoint" Workshops helped us understand how to translate our brand identity in every area of internal and external interaction. Finally, in 2014, the Communications Planning Support Program resulted in a communications plan detailing desired goals.

The results of that multi-year effort are reflected in this document and are intended to aid the future Pastor Nominating Committee as they undertake their search to call the next pastor.

II. Vision Statement

Following God's Light: Sowing, Growing, and Celebrating

III. Mission Statement

Western Presbyterian Church is building faith, family, and fellowship. We are Christ-centered, nurturing, caring, welcoming, and generous. WPC nurtures spiritual growth, joyful fellowship, meaningful community, and global involvement; worshipping and serving God with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love. We strive to:

- Inspire worship in our hearts, minds, and actions in honor and celebration of Christ.
- Provide a sanctuary of faith for all people where support, empathy, and a sense of community are realized.
- Cultivate spiritual growth by encouraging each congregant to discern God's presence and guidance.
- Be a catalyst for growth and relevance of the local and extended Church.
- Extend our faith beyond our own experience through outreach to those who are unaware of Christ's grace.
- Be Christ's disciples through both local and global mission efforts.
- Guide, nurture, and support the youth of our congregation and community.
- Sponsor Canal Town Nursery School and other youth-based programs.

IV. Our Church and Our People

A. History of Western Presbyterian Church (WPC) -

In 1811 a building for worship was erected on land donated by General John Swift, founder of Palmyra. A majority of the worshipers were Presbyterians who had previously attended a church about 9 miles away in East Palmyra. WPC was organized in 1817 by a Rev. Frances Pomeroy with 56 members. Rev. Jesse Townsend became the first pastor.

The cornerstone for the WPC edifice was laid in 1832. Worship in the building began in 1834. In 1866 land was purchased to build sheds for horses and buggies. These were removed in 1921. In 1909 a parsonage was built one block from the church. In 1976 this was sold so ministers could take advantage of owning their own home if they chose to.

Over the years our church building has been used for many worthy community activities such as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, Rotary, Red Cross blood drives, and Memorial services. It is used at Christmas time for an annual ecumenical combined choir program that raises money for the Good Neighbor Fund, a fund that helps people in need throughout the communities of Palmyra and Macedon.

In 1965 WPC adopted a unicameral form of government. It brought the Elders, the Deacons and the Trustees together in a single Board known as the Session. Session is divided into a number of Ministry Teams that do the work.

B. WPC Today

1. Staff

WPC has 7 part time staff:

Office assistant- 15 hours per week; Sexton, Choir Director, Organist, Sunday School/Vacation Bible School Director, Bell Choir Director, and Financial Secretary.

2. Mission Activities

Mission and Social Concerns Ministry Team is about being nurturing, caring & generous; to be Christ's disciples through both local and global mission efforts. We seek God's help to direct our Mission and Social Concerns Team to help where needed within our community and globally.

3. Christian Education

WPC offers Sunday school for children aged 3 to 8th grade youth and adults. Youth 9th – 12th grade are encouraged to serve as teachers and/or aides in the Sunday school. Adults Sunday school has been led by lay leaders. Children from birth to age 3 are part of a Splash Program to keep a connection with WPC prior to Sunday school.

Pastor has led confirmation for youth aged 12+ years with each youth being accompanied by an adult member who serves as a mentor to the confirmand. Pastor has led adult studies at times other than Sunday mornings.

CE has led Vacation Bible School jointly with the Palmyra Reformed Church.

During Worship, CE schedules volunteers to watch toddlers parents choose to remove from worship. Children of the church are able to light candles, ring the bell, greet and usher.

On Joy Sunday and Pentecost the children and youth of the church lead the worship service. On Palm Sunday, children and youth have a parade during the service. Children also participate in worship with music and reading scripture and prayers.

CE has provided opportunities for the children to participate in or lead mission activities of the congregation. Children have raised money for Kenya Water Project and donations to One Great Hour of Sharing. Health Kits for Gifts of the Heart Project were donated and packaged through the children's efforts.

4. Canal Town Nursery School

CTNS has been a ministry of WPC for over 40 years. WPC has members on the Board of Directors of CTNS. Children, aged 3 – 4 years, from Palmyra, Macedon and other neighboring towns are provided with a morning nursery school program. WPC is a site for one classroom of the **Universal Pre-Kindergarten** with the Pal-Mac School District. UPK meets every morning during the school year. Toddlers and Parents are offered a Mom and Tot program with creative play one morning a week. A family sign language class is available one morning a week.

5. Fellowship at WPC

Our Fellowship Ministry Team focuses on providing opportunities for fellowship that enrich our lives together as a family of faith.

Fellowship at WPC encompasses many different celebrations and functions within the congregation. We open the year celebrating Epiphany. Each year we change the venue so there is always a surprise. The Fellowship team organizes many "Pot Luck" luncheons throughout the year and these too are well attended and also tend to follow some part of the liturgical year. Fall finds Fellowship organizing the long time tradition of Western Horizons where we honor our members who have faithfully served the church for 50 years or more. As we look forward to the Hanging of the Greens and Advent approaches the team has organized caroling in the past and is always looking for ways to bring the joy of Christmas to others. Winter though cold seems not to discourage the gathering of folks for the annual "Sweets and Treats" right before Lent begins. As the Sunday school year ends we gather for a picnic and celebrate the warmth and love we all share with many laughs. Family game nights with fun snacks are always fun and we encourage members to bring friends with them to join in the fun. In the summer it's fun to catch a Red Wings game.

6. Worship

We believe in and worship God the Father, Jesus Christ our Lord and the Holy Spirit. Our services reflect our Presbyterian heritage and follow the Christian liturgical calendar. Services include: Scripture readings, prayers, sermon, children's sermon, music and the sacraments of communion and baptism. Our worship services are each Sunday at 10AM, with special evening services scheduled throughout the year in observance of Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Christmas Eve, National Day of Prayer, etc. We welcome all people to join us in worship.

7. New Members Perspectives

One new couple was very impressed with the mission emphasis as exemplified by the Kenya Water Project. However, they noted the lack of being welcomed by the congregation.

8. Strengths

Deep and long-standing tradition, spiritually educated membership, strong core of leadership, well-developed Sunday School Program, membership engaged in a broad swath of community organizations, beautiful building, mission-oriented membership, excellent music program, Canal-Town Nursery School and its associated Universal Pre-K program. WPC is financially well endowed, with a caring and generous membership interested in Global Mission.

9. Challenges

Challenges include a lack of programming for young adult, waning volunteerism within the church due to age and other community commitments, entrenched traditionalism with a tendency to resist change; an aging demographic leading to attrition and corresponding financial stress, and minimal use of social-media. At the same time another church in the community, Cross Creek, is gaining members and prompts us to probe what lessons can be learned. Modeled after Willow Creek Chicago, Cross Creek is said to be a gateway church that is attracting young families. Our challenge is how to attract families who are searching for a deeper spiritual need. Are we intimidating to prospective members?

C. Outlook for WPC in the future

- WPC looks for opportunities to serve the local and global missions involving all members of the church.
- WPC is a member of the Palmyra-Macedon-Farmington Clergy Council and works with the churches to support the Food Pantry, Clothing Cupboard, and Good Neighbor Fund.

- WPC is finding ways to build faith, family, and fellowship, with activities planned by Fellowship, Christian Education, Property, Worship, Deacons, Mission, and Finance ministry teams that involve the entire congregation. Some examples:
 1. Epiphany Service/Pot Luck
 2. Advent Choral Festival
 3. Vacation Bible School
 4. Canal Town Event
 5. Angel Tree Project
 6. Summer Lunches at Library
 7. Grace Urban Ministry Dinners
 8. Clean-up Day
 9. Kenya Water Project
 10. Health Kits
 11. Rummage Sale
 12. Prayer Lists
 13. Cereal Sunday - donation
 14. Caroling
 15. World Day of Prayer
 16. Family Game Nights
- WPC is upgrading audio/visual system to include improved audio collection for CDs given to shut-ins, and the addition of screens visible to the congregation for visuals to support the message of the worship service.
- WPC intends to attract young families and develop corresponding youth programs.

D. WPC's role in the community

WPC's role in the community is one of service and activity. We are active doers of faith having initiated and supported many community projects, such as the Angel Tree Christmas project, the Clothing Cupboard, the Summer Lunch Program and others. WPC members stand out in local service organizations - Rotary, Lions Club, Kiwanis. Our building has been home to the Canal Town Nursery School for many years. Recently we have added a Universal Pre-Kindergarten program. For two years, we have opened our doors to the community for the National Day of Prayer, inviting people to come in for prayer and meditation. The community has come to know WPC as a leader in ecumenical endeavors, particularly the Good Neighbor Fund, Food Cupboard, Vacation Bible School, and Advent Choral Festival. We strive to be a Christ-centered, nurturing, caring, welcoming and generous presence in our community.

E. Ministries and Program of the Church

1. Local Mission

Our Mission & Social Concerns Team along with the congregation as a whole has served many countless hours in our community volunteering and providing leadership for many worthwhile projects. Budgeted mission giving is approximately \$11,500 per year not including special offerings.

- Victim Resource Center*
- Palmyra-Macedon-Farmington Food Pantry (financial & over 300 volunteer hours, including monthly Cereal Sunday)*
- Home Meal Service (financial & volunteer hours)*
- Palmyra Library Free Summer Lunch Program (volunteer hours & organizing)
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Clothing Cupboard (over 30 volunteer hours)

- Gift of Hearts (shipping costs)
 - Annual Red Cross Blood Drive
 - Northwest Neighborhood Outreach Center- prepare meals/serve
 - Good Neighbor Fund**
 - ARC friends
 - Senior Citizen complex- Holiday Fruit Basket
 - Used Book Drive and New Book Drive for School #7 Rochester, NY
 - Cookies baskets around Valentine's Day for our college students
- *Over the last 2 years these organizations with our Session approval have submitted grants which were approved by Presbytery of Geneva to receive Grants.

** This is under restructuring as of June 1, 2015 due to Pastor Retirement

2. Global Mission

Helping Hearts & Hands- (Kenya Water Project) - raised nearly \$20,000 to put in a well and holding tank for a village/school. This was a church-wide Mission project that was separate from our regular Mission Funds.

Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections- Not only has our Mission Team helped support this endeavor, but there are members of our congregation who personally assist students for their higher education tuition.

3. Deacons

Deacons Ministry Team is responsible for offering ministries of sympathy and service to the sick, shut-in, and others in special need. This team is also responsible for preparing the elements for celebrations of the Lord's Supper. It fulfills these responsibilities through:

1. Regular visits and prayers for those who are shut-in, ill, and otherwise in need.
2. Mailing monthly greetings to shut-ins, and get-well, birthday and anniversary wishes to members.
3. Maintaining the prayer and congratulatory lists that appear in each week's bulletin.
4. Providing flowers and CD's of worship services to members unable to attend worship.
5. Preparing the elements and communion table for celebrations of the Lord's Supper, and cleaning up afterward.
6. Offering faith based financial support, on occasion, to individuals and organizations in need.
7. Participating in Session deliberations regarding personnel matters.

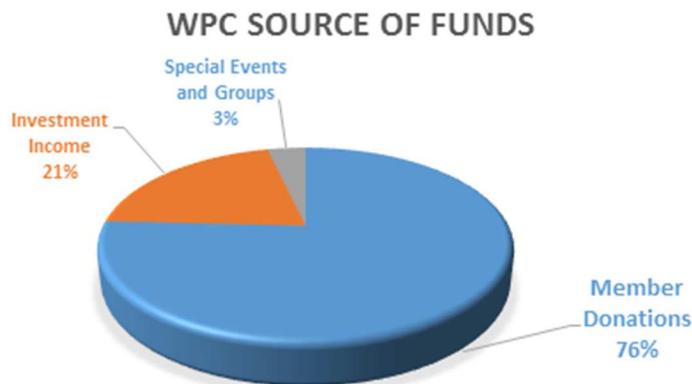
4. Christian Education

Sunday School is before worship 9:00-9:45 from last Sunday in September to Pentecost.

- Classes are held for ages 3 – Kindergarten; 1st – 5th graders, 6th-8th graders, and adult
- Vacation Bible School – 4 mornings in Aug, held jointly with Palmyra Reformed Church
- Mission Project each year during Lent. 2015 project was Health Kits – collecting items and packaging kits for Gifts of the Heart PCUSA Project
- Cards for Shut-ins distributed for Christmas, Easter, and Valentine’s Day
- Lighting candles, ringing bell, greeting and ushering
- Confirmation
- Child-led worship services on Joy Sunday of Advent and Pentecost, Palm Sunday Parade during worship service
- Youth activities for those in Middle School Class and/or confirmation
- Pastor led Bible studies for adults not during Sunday school time.
- Triennium: inform High School youth of event, help provide funding and connect them to Presbytery.

F. Financial Profile

The faithful financial support of our members remained strong last year enabling us to continue valuable programs in Worship, Christian Education, and Mission Outreach to both the local and extended global communities. As shown in the chart below, the importance of member donations cannot be overstated. Without the faithful and



generous contributions of our members, the important work of our church would not be able to move forward. In 2014 there were **123 members who donated \$144,880** to the work of the church.

With regard to operating results, income exceeded expenditures by over four thousand dollars. And after considering one time gifts and beneficial

timing of other expenses we finished the year in the black by \$11,293.

Total endowments of the church through May 2015 were \$2,302,659; income from which approaches \$80,000 - that amount split more or less evenly between daily operations of the church and edifice improvements and maintenance. Financial advisors

[Howe and Rusling](#) charted a steady course through increasingly volatile and churning investment waters to increase our overall endowment balances by 7.5% while at the same time earning important income at a rate averaging close to 4% that we use for church operations and to pay for maintenance and improvements to the edifice.

The Finance Ministry Team are diligent, persistent, and caring in their oversight of matters financial for the church. In addition to on-going financial care-taking the team has collectively:

- Supported numerous detailed inquiries from the auditor.
- Worked through several planning sessions for the 2015 budget.
- Coordinated pledge campaign and mailing.
- Recommended to Session a motion for investing the Cloyd Estate in a better way.
- Coordinated the reinvestment of the repayment of the housing fund.
- Approved a new practice for quarterly reporting of the miscellaneous funds.
- Re-deployed edifice income accounts to new investment vehicles with higher potential.
- Processed an additional signer for the Community accounts.
- Coordinated endowment information request from a donor's attorney.

V. Palmyra and Surrounding Communities

A. History

The town of Palmyra was created in January 1789. It was developed from land obtained in the Phelps and Gorham Purchase in 1788 on mounds left from the prehistoric Adena Culture. The land currently known as Wayne County was purchased by General John Swift and was originally known as Swift's Landing. Soon after settlement started the town became the District of Tolland. In January 1796 the official name "Palmyra" was proposed and adopted from the ancient city [Palmyra](#) in [Syria](#) reportedly to impress a new school teacher. The town had a population of nearly one thousand people by 1800. The village of Palmyra was incorporated in 1827.

Palmyra began to prosper when the first newspaper of Wayne County, the "Palmyra Register" printed its first issue in 1817 giving the community an inexpensive means of communication and with the governor's decision to build the Erie Canal. Palmyra had been a large part of the Underground Railroad in the mid 1800's and by 1900 it had become a railroad and industrial center.

B. Demographics

1. Education

Palmyra-Macedon Primary School for grades K-2. Enrollment (2013-14): 483

Palmyra-Macedon Intermediate School for grades 3-5. Enrollment (2013-14):

403 Palmyra-Macedon Middle School for grades 6-8. Enrollment (2013-14): 429

Palmyra-Macedon High School for grades 9-12. Enrollment (2013-14): 631

All of the Primary-High schools are located on campuses within the town proper. AP academics are offered at the High School level and have a 28% participation rate. There was a 95.3% graduation rate for the 2013-14 school year.

For residents aged 25 or older 95.5% have a High School or higher level degree. 19.8% have a bachelor's degree and 6.6% have graduate or professional level degrees.

A wealth of colleges and universities are available within a 25 mile radius of Palmyra including Rochester Institute of Technology, University of Rochester, Roberts Wesleyan College, Nazareth College, St John Fisher College, Monroe Community College, Eastman School of Music and Empire State College.

Church membership draws from the areas surrounding Palmyra. One of the closest municipalities is Macedon, NY with whom Palmyra shares a school district. Macedon is located approximately 3.6 miles from Palmyra; demographic information regarding Macedon is included below.

2. Median Income

Palmyra: Estimated median household income in 2012 was \$41,783.00 (up from \$38,561.00 in 2000). The estimated per capita income in 2012 was \$21,438.00 (up from \$19,087 in 2000). (city-data.com)

Macedon: Estimated median household income \$54,000 (up from \$45,774.00 in 2000). (city-data.com)

3. Population-2013

Total Population: Palmyra: 7975

Total Population: Macedon: 9148

4. Other Data

Palmyra

Median house value: \$86,675.

68% of housing units are owner-occupied, 32% of housing units are renter-occupied, 1.2% of housing units are vacant.

Median gross rent: \$726

Mean travel time to work: 20.8 miles

Unemployment rate (June 2014): 5.6%

Macedon

Median house value: \$115,376.

77.6% of housing units are owner-occupied, 22.4% of housing units are renter-occupied, 1.5% of housing units are vacant.

Unemployment rate (June 2014): 5.6%

Palmyra is located on the southern border of Wayne County. It is a “canal town” and is a part of the Erie Canal Heritage Trail. The New York State Thruway is 6 miles from the town making travel within the state easy and accessible. Wine trail attractions, the Finger Lakes and Lake Ontario are near-by and offer endless opportunities for recreation.

Palmyra is located in Wayne County which has a total population of 92,500. From 2000-2013 the county has experienced a substantial decline in youth and young adults: Residents ages 60-84 has grown 40% and age 85+ has increased by 26%. The unemployment rate in the county (2013) was 7.5% with total job decline 200-2013 of 6%. Average salary for the county is \$39,200.00

The closest urban area is Rochester, NY which is approximately 23 miles to the west. Due to its proximity Palmyra is considered part of a nine county region designated as the greater Rochester region. This region has a total population of 1.5 million with Wayne County accounting for 7.6% of the total.

C. Palmyra Activities and Traditions

There are plenty of opportunities to engage in Palmyra with a variety of activities and traditions through the year. These would be Hill Cumorah Pageant, Palmyra Canaltown Days, Palmyra Pirate Weekend, Curling on the Canal, Trick or Treat on Main Street, Holiday Open House, Palmyra Farmer’s Market, Movies-in-the-Park, Community Garage Sale, Summer Concert Series, Historic Palmyra Cemetery Tour and the Wayne County Fair.

D. Community Organizations

Those wishing to serve on a civic organization have many choices such as; Palmyra-Macedon Rotary Club, Palmyra-Macedon Lions Club, Palmyra-Macedon Kiwanis Club, The Green Angels, VFW, American Legion. There are also opportunities to serve on the boards of our Community Library, Palmyra-Macedon School and Community Center to name a few.

E. Economic Climate

The Palmyra area (which includes Macedon) encompasses approximately 70 square miles in southwest Wayne County.

These towns are basically "bedroom" communities for Rochester as many residents live here and work in Rochester for Kodak, Xerox, PayChex, University of Rochester including Strong Hospital and the Wegmans Food Store chain.

Major industries in the Palmyra-Macedon area include Garlock Packing Co., Berry Plastics, Unique Automation and JRLon. There are also several machine shop operations which employ 10-20 employees and service the larger industries in Monroe County/Wayne County area.

Technology and education are a big part of this area. With the downsizing of Kodak and Xerox, many of the professionals from these companies have stayed and being entrepreneurial, have set up their own companies.

Areas of higher learning in the area include Finger Lakes Community College, Nazareth College, St. John Fisher College, Monroe Community College, Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Rochester.

Retail businesses abound in the area and include bookstores, antique stores, florists, auto parts and accessories, restaurants, farm stores and grocery stores. Several chains including Wal-Mart, Dunkin Donuts and McDonald's also have establishments nearby.

We are blessed with active community/business leadership which includes active Rotary and Lions Clubs as well as several business networking groups, Chamber of Commerce and County Business Council.

Housing in the Palmyra-Macedon area is affordable regardless of living in the village or in a more rural setting. Farming is still active in the area which includes dairy and crop. Some new business in the area which are starting to pop up are wineries and brew-crafters thanks to encouragement from New York State Economic Development.

F. Schools

Palmyra-Macedon Central School District in the top 40 percent of performance for school districts in the Rochester region, and was named by Buffalo's "Business First" as an "overachieving" School District. All school buildings are in Palmyra with the Intermediate located in Macedon.

We have 2 elementary level schools; Primary K-2 is a Model School nationally accredited by the Children's Institute and the Intermediate 3-5 is a 2009 NY State School of Character Award Recipient.

Middle School 6-8 located in Palmyra is an applicant school for accreditation by the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. School-wide culture & student learning are built on the "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens".

High School opportunities include the International Baccalaureate Diploma, Advanced Placement Courses with dual credit options with three local colleges. One of 27 schools in NY to earn Top Advanced Placement Honors (2013), 2010 Newsweek Top 1, 500 schools in the nation, 2011 Silver ranking by US News and World Reports for quality academic programs and student achievement. Award winning Select Choir & Jazz Ensemble. Over 40 athletic & extracurricular offerings, including an on-campus broadcasting studio.

For more information, go to
<http://www.palmaccsd.org/district.cfm?subpage=355603>

G. Other Churches

Our church is located on the historic 4-church intersection of Rt. 31 & Rt. 21 along with the Zion Episcopal Church, First United Methodist Church, and the Fellowship Baptist Church. We also have St. Anne's Catholic Church, the Reformed Church, Heritage Baptist, Church of Jesus Christ of LDS, Oasis of Hope Community Church, Palmyra Baptist Church, and Cross Creek Church within the Palmyra Township.

II. WPC Goals and Objectives

A. A Multi-year Process

August, 2011-Strategic Roundtable Presentation by the Ad Council (see p. 4, paragraph I. for "Who is the Ad Council") facilitated work by members to identify:

1. WHO we are: mission, history, goals, programs, competition
2. WHAT we do: work, primary constituents, recent research findings about our work
3. WHERE & HOW we accomplish our work: how we are unique, geographic area we serve, funding
4. WHY we are here: today, challenges, what we have done to resolve our problem

Since 1950, the Ad Council has been a community-based service organization committed to bringing voice to community issues and needs in partnership with nonprofit organizations from all segments of the community.

Work from the roundtable discussions provided the foundation for distilling an understanding of who and where we thought we were and what our core values were. We began to identify a logo that encompassed/reflected our essence.

October, 2011 Brand Development Workshop. 18 members worked with 2 Ad Council facilitators to develop a framework to identify and consistently articulate our "brand". A framework was created to survey members. Participants worked on brand essence (the heart and soul of the organization), brand promise (what is unique and compelling about the organization) and brand personality (the organization's characteristics and values). Research gathered from online surveys with 75 participants was reviewed and used to inform the framework as well as the next steps in the process.

December, 2011-Customer Touchpoint. Small groups worked within the emerging framework to refine the "brand and essence" materials gathered through the previous workshops to enable the Ad Council to provide a systematic platform for aligning our communication activities and decision-making. Groups included: Music/Fellowship, Pastoral Care/Worship, Communications/Committees, Youth Programs/Education, Mission/Community Presence, and Administration/Physical Location.

2014-Current Communications Task Force. The Task Force worked with Ad Council representatives to refine the language, message and outcome of the final framework. The written communications plan includes analysis of the following: Desired outcomes/goals (short and long term); target audiences); key messages and calls to action; communication strategies and supporting tactical steps; budget and timing. Implementation of the framework is on-going.

B. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

1. Introduction & Background

As part of an organizational commitment to brand development, integration and rollout, Western Presbyterian Church continued its work with the Ad Council with a Communications and Marketing Planning process beginning in May 2013.

The Western Presbyterian Church is located in Palmyra in Wayne County near Rochester, NY and is composed of people called by Jesus Christ to be his representatives in the world. Currently the church has a membership of 194 individuals and would like to add 25 members over the next 18 months. It was discussed that membership cannot just be measured solely in numbers though, as the church seeks to attract new people and families who are not simply on the member list, but those who will become actively engaged. Similarly with the current 194 members, it's not simply a matter of retaining them, but finding ways to increase their engagement levels and continue to adapt over time to meet their changing needs. Engagement with the church can mean a variety of things, including but not limited to, being emotionally/ spiritually engaged, investing time and/or talents in church activities, or giving a regular financial contribution to the church. Engagement with the church can be summed up as, "What are people called to do as members of this church and this community?" For many people, this answer will vary, but a desired outcome of this plan is that people will know how to answer this question and what to do, that's meaningful to them, as a result.

Meaningful engagement among membership has become more and more challenging with the changing realities of today's world. To name a few examples: there are more working moms and fewer stay-at-home moms who have time to participate in church activities during the day/ in their spare time; sporting events and other extracurricular commitments take up more of a family's time now than they once did; and the population is more transient in and around Palmyra which makes consistent participation a challenge with those individuals. While these are just a few examples, they demonstrate the fact that times have changed and the church recognizes the

need to adapt in order to mirror these realities of today and then communicate to the community how they've adapted.

Having this background information in mind, it makes sense that one of the recurring themes that surfaced during the Customer Touchpoint sessions and identified by the group was the importance of clear communication between the church, its members and the community at large. This was identified as taking many forms: printed, in-person interactions at the church and at church events, improvements made to personal phone calls, letters, emails, the website, and social media. It was recommended by the participants in the Customer Touchpoint evaluations that more current, relevant information needs to be distributed to various groups and the messaging should be consistent with the brand, while also staying relevant to the audience receiving the communication. Many of the suggestions given involved improving the clarity and consistency of communication, and even creation of new communication channels when necessary. This formal communications and marketing plan was developed to address and improve upon some of the challenges and background information noted in this section.

As a reminder, the following represents the Western Presbyterian Church brand platform that was developed by WPC leadership. As is the case for all other decision making for the church, this brand platform was used as the evaluative criteria for the development of the elements of this plan.

Brand Essence

Building Faith Family & Fellowship

Brand Personality

Christ-centered, Nurturing, Caring, Welcoming, Generous

Brand Promise

Only WPC nurtures spiritual growth, joyful fellowship, meaningful community and global involvement; worshipping and serving God with energy, intelligence, imagination and love.

2. Desired Outcomes/Goals (Short and Long Term)

- Elevate WPC brand in order to educate and retain current members / Facilitate the internalization of the church brand for current church members to take ownership of living it
- Elevate WPC brand to support new member recruitment activities
- Add 25 new members over the next 18 months
- Transform churchgoers into engaged church givers (time, talents, money)

3. Target Audiences (for this marketing plan)

Primary Target Audience:

- Current Church Members (regular and intermittent attendees)
- Regular, Active Members
- Intermittent, Inactive or More Passive Members (or lapsed attendees who have not joined a new Church)
- People with the potential to give financially (e.g., empty nesters)

Secondary Target Audience:

- Seekers (Prospective Church Members)
- Individuals/ families in the area who are church shopping
- Families/ new parents seeking a faith or spiritual option
- Newly engaged
- Support seekers (difficult life issues)
- Community/global involvement seekers
- Individuals seeking answers to life's questions (spiritual seekers)

4. Key Messages and Calls-to-Action

Current Church Members

Regular, Active Members

- WPC is an important part of my/ my family's life
- The WPC activities I/ my family participate(s) in are a good use of my/ our time
- WPC provides meaningful engagement opportunities that fit my/ my family's lifestyle
- There is a lifetime of opportunities for me/ my family to stay involved with WPC
- WPC provides a place for spiritual life and growth
- I understand and support what WPC is all about and WPC understands and supports me

Intermittent, Inactive, or More Passive Members (or lapsed attendees who have not joined a new church)

- WPC is an exciting place with which I want to reconnect
- All of the above

b. Seekers (Prospective Members)

Individuals/ families in the area who are church shopping

- o WPC offers new, exciting opportunities while maintaining a tie to their history and traditions
- o WPC helps me to meet the needs of where I'm at in my life

- o I understand and support what WPC is all about and WPC understands and supports me

Families/ new parents seeking a faith or spiritual option

- o WPC is very extended family-friendly and is a family itself
- o WPC has opportunities for youth to maintain their involvement with the church as they grow
- o WPC has people with shared values

Newly engaged

- o WPC is a great traditional setting to get married
- o WPC has many opportunities to help us nurture and grow conventional relationship
- o WPC is extended family-friendly

Support seekers (difficult life issues)

- o WPC is a very welcoming community
- o WPC is a place to search for answers
- o WPC is a great place for support

Community/ global involvement seekers

- o WPC has people with shared values
- o WPC has many activities related to my specific interests
- o WPC is a great way to get involved in/ stay connected to my community

Individuals seeking answers to life's questions (spiritual seekers)

- o WPC is a place to search for answers
- o WPC has people with shared values
- o WPC understands and supports me

C. Communications Strategies and Supporting Tactical Steps

1. **GOAL 1: Elevate WPC brand in order to educate and retain current members / Facilitate the internalization of the church brand for current church members to take ownership of living it**

Strategy I:

- o Acknowledge current member activities that are in line with the brand
- o Develop and implement process for consistent recognition of current WPC members who have demonstrated brand elements
- o Create postcards with each of the 5 Brand Personality traits and the Brand Essence at the top and place them in a rack underneath the church bulletin

board; Encourage members to fill out cards and help acknowledge the great things they have seen their fellow members doing. Include box for people to insert cards once they've been filled out. WPC leadership/ volunteers can sort and post to bulletin board on a monthly basis.

- Acknowledge new comments at each service, at events, and in other church communications (i.e. newsletter, bulletin, website, on Facebook); Remind people that they can fill out cards if they know of someone who should be highlighted on the board.

Strategy II:

Ensure church's external environment is reflective of the brand

- Assess church interior space and include elements that will help reinforce specific brand elements
- Design and hang banners that are colorful, engaging, and include imagery or words that reflect specific brand elements or current church activities
- In sanctuary, include new décor that communicates warmth and welcoming; Possibly bring in a volunteer interior decorator if necessary to assist in generating ideas; Include image of Christ
- Ensure that church doors are open at all possible times to communicate welcoming
- Develop and put up welcome signage inside church
- Develop and install interior signage to easily communicate the locations of important areas of the church (restrooms, classrooms, child care, etc.)

Increase accessibility to the church and throughout the church itself

- Provide accessibility to 2nd floor of church (this is a longer-term goal)-
DONE!
- Ensure that parking is always accessible
 - Snow and ice is removed in the Winter months; Escorts provided for the elderly or disabled
 - Reserve one parking lot or spaces close to the church specifically for visitors; Include signage on those spots that says, "Welcome Visitors of WPC Church!"
 - Develop and install exterior signage to inform people of alternative parking options if main lots are full

Assess church exterior and include elements that will help reinforce specific brand elements

- Brighten outdoor lighting in front of the church to indicate welcoming and "serving God with energy"
- Place planters in front of the church with sunflowers or seasonal flowers/ plants
- Purchase and hang signage or flag to communicate that WPC is "open for business"

Strategy III:

Educate current members on what they can do to assist with new member recruitment

- Create a “Welcoming Team” to help welcome new members or visitors at the annual Canal Town Days event
- Recruit individuals to this committee who are familiar with the current congregation and would recognize new faces
- Instruct committee members to engage with new members or visitors to ensure they don’t feel “left out” or like an outsider
- For smaller events, assign “Hosts” to new members or visitors who will introduce them to other members and “show them the ropes” (e.g., “This Sunday’s coffee hour is sponsored by: John and Jane. New members and visitors, please look for them down at coffee hour and they will be happy to introduce you to other WPC members.”) Hosts can also welcome people as they enter the service while wearing name tags that indicate their role as an additional way to put a face to the name.

Strategy IV:

Ensure that Sunday service experience is in line with brand elements

- Ensure that all members are verbally welcomed at the beginning of service
- Train the readers responsible for welcome message on timing and delivery
- Ensure there are greeters and ushers at every service; Encourage them to say hello to members by name (if they know them)
- Continue candle lighting tradition to reinforce Christ-Centered history of church. Remind members of the significance of the candle lighting/snuffing out at the beginning and end of the service (i.e. That it is a visual reminder that the lighter is bringing God’s light into the service and then taking His light out into the world at the end of the service)
- Verbalize the meaning of this tradition to members at the closing of each service

Include appropriate materials to enhance the sermon’s message and reinforce the brand

- Bulletins
- Sunflower seed packets
- Postcards/ Other handouts

Strategy V:

Create and maintain a Facebook page for the church

Develop a written job description and publish in church bulletin or send to local colleges/ universities to recruit marketing expert or college marketing intern to manage the page (in 6 month increments)

Develop a social media plan/calendar that includes realistic number of posts per week and takes into consideration planned events and other church activities

- o Recruit base number of followers by promoting page to current members and asking them to “like” the page at the end of every sermon
- o Place link to Facebook page on current church website
- o Encourage conversation and feedback from current members on page
- o Post pictures from past and current church events – remind everyone at end of sermons that they can access the pictures/share their own by visiting the Facebook page
- o Create picture albums specific to church events and activities

See appendix for links to example Facebook pages and social media calendar template

2. GOAL 2: Elevate WPC brand to support new member recruitment activities (general outreach)

Strategy I:

Appeal to seeker audiences at relevant locations

Develop lifecycle-specific materials

- o Newly engaged couples
- o Expectant or new parents
- o Planning a funeral for a loved one
- o If paid advertising is an option, place targeted ads in the birth/engagement announcement sections of local publications

Example: “Looking for a place to celebrate your special day?”

Conduct an environmental scan of area businesses with a focus on these audiences & place appropriate materials at each location and/or schedule a sit down meeting with business owner and provide them with materials to hand out

- o Wedding-related venues (bakery, florist, dress shop, photographer, etc.)
- o Realtors’ Offices
- o Funeral Homes/Funeral Directors
- o Town Hall
- o Apartment Complexes

Position the church as a place to turn for those “seeking answers” during times of crisis (i.e. natural disaster, violence, etc.)

- o Create a template press release with information on available support services and who to contact
 - Template can be easily tailored to include information on church activities that are happening related to the specific crisis (candlelight vigil, clothing drive, etc.)
 - Create a list of relevant media contacts for press release distribution, and distribute press release within 8 hours of reported incident
 - See appendix for template press release example
- o Develop a consistent public message for distribution in the community after a crisis
 - Place small message/ad in local bulletins, publications, online, etc.
- o Look for opportunities to have Pastor write opinion pieces for local publications or local online blogs
- o Create a lit area with a bench for people to sit in front of the church with a sign or some way to communicate “step into the light”

Create and maintain a Facebook page for the church

- o Recruit marketing expert or college marketing intern to manage the page (in 6 month increments)
- o Develop a social media plan/calendar that includes realistic number of posts per week and takes into consideration timely life or seasonal events (i.e. Wedding Season, Holidays, times of need)
 - Place link to Facebook page on current church website
 - Post pictures from past and current church events
 - Create picture albums specific to church events and activities, weddings, youth-centered activities (Vacation Bible School, Camp Whitman, etc.), community-based events (caroling, Kenya Water Project, distribution of Bibles/blankets/scarves)
 - Develop a consistent public message appropriate for placement on Facebook page after a crisis (i.e. natural disaster, violence, etc.)
 - Highlight and celebrate general community members (even if they aren't WPC members) who have demonstrated an element of the WPC brand
- o See appendix for links to example Facebook pages and social media calendar template

Strategy II:

Create opportunities for current members to “bring a friend” to services or events

Include invitation to “bring a friend” in written and verbal announcements of events – making it clear that new people are always welcome and nothing is member-only

3. GOAL 3: Grow church membership from 205 to 300 (once they are in the door)

Strategy I:

Develop a streamlined welcome process for interested prospective members

- Streamline the “blue card” process
- Make the card more visually appealing
- Change the name of card to “welcome card” or “visitor’s card” to easily explain its purpose
- Develop a clear follow up procedure for card (i.e. Who distributes card, where the card goes once it’s filled out, who follows up)

Provide new members and visitors with a “welcome basket”

- Basket may include a directory of current members, calendar of events, a personal note from church leader, contact information, fridge magnet, sunflower seed packets, other individual-specific items (e.g., A religious-themed children’s book for families with young kids, etc.)
- Develop a process for creating and distributing baskets – could be a committee activity

Identify visitors and new members at each service; have greeters (separate from ushers) with a specific set of responsibilities to welcome all visitors and new members, introduce themselves to unfamiliar faces

- Include training in new usher/greeter orientation

Strategy II:

Use annual Canal Town Days event as recruitment opportunity

- Include a call to new people in all advertising/ outreach efforts
- Examples: “Interested in meeting new people?”; “Come join us for one of the community’s largest events.”; “All are welcome!”
- Create a “Welcoming Team” to welcome new members or visitors at the Canal Town Days event
- Include individuals who are familiar with the current congregation and would recognize new faces
- Instruct committee members to engage with new members or visitors to ensure they don’t feel “left out” or like an outsider

Develop brand appropriate materials signage for use at the events, in external advertising/ communications

- o Include messages about WPC's ministry, membership, and services
- o Highlight the type of members you want to recruit more of at certain times (if you want to recruit more families, highlight pictures or examples of current WPC families who have demonstrated brand elements)
 - Example: "The Hodge family cares about making a difference in the community. They have a busy schedule with sports, school and other family commitments, but they enjoy volunteering once a month for the Kenya Water Project. Come meet the Hodge family at next week's Canal Town Days event!"

Develop and distribute handouts that include "ways to get involved"

- o Attach handout to a small gift, like a small plate of cookies, sunflower seed packets or other token item
- o Include a large scope of ways to get involved, from volunteering for a specific activity, to donating, to becoming a full-fledged member of WPC

Strategy III:

Create a welcoming environment conducive to people who are new to the church, both inside and out

- o Increase the amount/ visibility of signage to make it easy to navigate- Welcome, Open, directional information
- o Produce map for inside the church with "you are here" indicators- similar to signage inside a shopping mall
- o Turnover/ condense CTNS sandwich boards
- o Include a banner with brand-supporting words and elements
- o Clean up the clutter around the back door area or convert to a closet or more well-organized area for storage
- o Place welcoming scents by church entrances, being mindful of allergies (scent examples: bayberry, cloves, pine, cinnamon, vanilla, bread)

4. GOAL 4: Transform churchgoers into engaged church givers (time, talents, money)

Strategy I:

Develop an understanding about what engagement opportunities will reflect the realities of our members' lives

Conduct an input session (or distribute a questionnaire) among current members to gain perspective on what they'd like to get out of their participation in WPC activities. Ask them to answer the following questions:

- o What activities do you currently participate in? Why?
- o What do you like about the activities?
- o What do you want to see WPC do more or/less of?
- o If small groups/circles were offered, what types would you be most interested in?
- o What would make you more likely to attend additional or different WPC activities?

Shorten term limits for committee members to avoid “burn out”

- o Ask current committee members what they believe a reasonable term limit to be, based on their experience. Some committees may have an adjusted term to one year while shorter term projects may be 4 weeks.
- o Develop a questionnaire for all new and current members to indicate their areas of interest with regard to how they would like to volunteer/spend their time
- o Create an easy to use database of questionnaire answers that you can refer back when needs arise
- o See appendix for example questions
- o Get input from families at the beginning of each youth class or Confirmation class to see what works best for their schedules

Strategy II:

Create meaningful opportunities for members to get engaged

Utilize feedback received as a result of tactics outlined in **Goal 4: Strategy I** to modify current or create new engagement opportunities offered by WPC

- o Set clear expectations for members volunteering their time or talents & understand members’ limitations
 - o Create an outline for each engagement opportunity – how much time is required, what kind of talents/ skills are needed, how many people are needed in order for the effort to be successful
 - o Communicate expectations at time of committee recruitment and ensure everyone understands their responsibilities once committee has been formed
 - o Clearly articulate the benefits of volunteering and/or joining a specific group (e.g., Is the new women’s circle primarily about family-related issues or is it primarily about being a spiritual woman in the modern world?)
- Make personalized volunteer recruitment asks/group invitations to members based on their available time, interests, and talents

- Volunteering Example: “John, you expressed that you’d be interested in hosting small events – would you be willing to host an upcoming coffee hour?”
- Small Group Involvement Example: “Jane, you expressed that you’d be interested in attending more women-based groups – would you be interested in attending our small group discussion on the 8th?”
- Talent/Skill Example: “Josh, you indicated you’d be willing to lend some of your landscaping skills to church projects – would you be able to help us plant some new shrubs next month?”

Strategy III:

Intentionally display different ways of engaging in the church community

- Highlight examples of members answering the question - “What does engagement mean to me?”
- WPC bulletin, newsletter, on website, on Facebook, bulletin board in the church
- Marry ways for members to feed spirituality with an actual WPC activity/ committee/ project/ monetary gift
- At the end of each service, include a call to action message like: “You just heard about “hospitality” in today’s sermon – here are 3 ways you can practice that...”
- Include “What you can do to engage with WPC this month” section in WPC bulletin, newsletter, on website, on Facebook
- Give people specific examples of things they can do to get involved, make it clear how to get involved including who to contact
- Does not necessarily need to be sermon-specific

Strategy IV:

Align asks for donations with specific projects, causes or WPC activities

- Create a calendar for giving asks
- What types of projects, causes, issues or WPC activities are related to different times of year (e.g., Thanksgiving ask will be different than ask related to summer youth program)
- Maintain transparency in what funds are being used for
- Communicate in verbal and written communications where their money is going, even if it’s for operational costs like a new roof or improvements in the parking arrangement

Establish specific monetary goals for individual projects, causes or WPC activities

- Communicate progress towards goals at services, on Facebook (when appropriate), on

- website, in bulletin
- For larger monetary goals, use visual representation of funds raised/funds still needed in front of church or in a digital form on the website, on Facebook (e.g., a thermometer that tracks progress)
- Establish and communicate total project goal and what each dollar helps fund (i.e. \$5 = a specific item in a Christmas basket for a family; \$20 = covers cost of the whole basket, which includes xyz ; etc.)

[Marry ways to feed spirituality with an actual WPC activity/committee/project/monetary gift](#)

- At the end of each service, include a call to action message like: “You just heard about “hospitality” in today’s sermon – here are 3 ways you can practice that...”; One of those 3 ways is to give \$5 to this specific project that relates to hospitality
- For those short on time or ability to volunteer, highlight giving to specific activities as a way to stay engaged with the church

5. Measures

- Attendance at events
- Number of hours spent on church events/ planning
- Number of people volunteering (regular volunteering vs. intermittent)
- Number of members (300 is goal)
- Attendance at Sunday sessions
- Qualitative results from ongoing survey that targets brand elements
- Debriefs among program/event leaders measuring demonstration of brand elements

6. Budget

Many of the items in this plan require an investment of time vs. an investment of money, so WPC will prioritize the order in which they will tackle the strategies and tactics in order to get them off the ground most effectively. There are some items that would require a moderate investment of WPC church funds, and those decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis as they arise. Church and community members will remain in the loop regarding most financial decisions related to executing this plan as a way to get their buy-in and support related to any changes forthcoming.

7. Timing

This plan will begin in 2014, with support from Session members, the staff and volunteers, and can be used as a guide for church efforts on an ongoing basis.