

Vision Team

DRAFT minutes 02/04/2025

Attendance

Members

Marcus Lambright

Jeremy T. Campbell

Steve Huston

Denise Kennedy

Kirk Woodward

Dave Myers

Rhonda Myers

Linwood Bagby

Debbie Murphy

Dan Martian

Berj Gulleyan

Joanne Van Sant

Wanda Lundy

Excused

Doris Peterson

Leah Fowler

Roger Widicus

Gayle Griffin

Vision Team met for its regular meeting on zoom at 4:00 PM on February 2025. The meeting was opened with prayer.

The team took up some request for funding... broadly speaking these fell into two categories Insurance grants as were made last year - Ridgefield Park and Bloomfield Church on the Green requested support toward increased insurance premiums. It was VOTED to grant these requests.

The second category was larger capital projects. These came from St Paul's Newark, to remove a dilapidated building, and Elizabeth ave. Weequihic to repair a roof. It was decided that Jeremy and Steve would work with the congregations to apply for loans through PILP and commit the presbytery as guarantor if the way be clear, and the finance team to determine what could be available if needed for bridge funding during that application process.

The vision team took a first look at a position description for a new "Presbytery Mission Team" which would replace the vision team and be responsible for coordinating the work of the presbytery and accountability toward its identified missional priorities. Team members wondered what would happen to the trustees function in this system and were clear they didn't want to maintain that role. It was suggested a new group, maybe representative of people from vision, finance, com etc could be constituted for trustee responsibility. It was also asked what then with the leadership summit and determined that the new Team would have responsibility for creating such events including summits as were necessary to coordinate and interoperate the work of the presbytery which would include but not be limited to the leadership summit.

The vision team then met with representatives from the Highlands Presbyterian Church in Allendale to hear their proposal and rationale for selling their building to the city of Allendale with a leaseback arrangement which would allow them to continue to worship. In exchange for the lease back of the building it would be sold for less than market value. It was agreed that Foundry Commercial, a national commercial real estate firm which has been engaged by the Presbyterian Foundation, and recommended to the presbyteries be utilized to negotiate this arrangement to ensure the church understands what the agreement entails and that it is fair. Following much discussion it was VOTED to allow this plan to proceed and the property to be sold for no less than 1/2 the appraised value to the municipality.

Rev. Campbell then informed the team that True Light Presbyterian Church was nearing a final decision on the refinance of their existing mortgage which would require the teams approval and that they should be on the look out over the next 2 weeks or so for final terms and lender selection to be approved by evote.

Rev. Jeremy Campbell closed with prayer.

Attest

Rev. Jeremy T. Campbell
Stated Clerk/Corporate Secretary

Below is the rationale from Highlands.

For 50 years our congregation HPC has worshipped in the historic Chapel of the Willows as it was known in the 1800's, the oldest public building in Allendale NJ. Many of the founding families of Allendale have passed through its doors and many are memorialized in the beautiful stain glass windows that line the sanctuary. For many years our congregation flourished but the past 15-20 years we have seen a steady decrease in membership due to relocation, death and cultural trends, and most notably COVID. The cost

of maintenance and upkeep of our historic space continues to increase as our financial resources decrease. Like many small congregations we are at a crossroads but with hope.

After several meetings with the Mayor of Allendale we have the unique opportunity to shape the future of our sacred space by joining in partnership with the town. Allendale doesn't want to see our historic building demolished as it is integral to the village's identity as noted by the rendition of the church on the community mural in the center of town. Recognizing the unique place the sanctuary holds in Allendale's history they would like to see the space preserved as do we. We envision the space being used not only as a continuing place of worship for Highlands Presbyterian Church (HPC) on Sundays, but also there is a discussion about serving as a senior center, a historical museum, and an event space especially for musical offerings.

How best to accomplish this? We would like to sell the property to the town at the price one-half (1/2) the appraised value. During a frank conversation with the mayor, it was clear that the town doesn't have the funds to purchase the property at the appraised value. What is clear though is their desire to preserve the building. As part of the contract of sale, HPC would be permitted to continue to worship in the sanctuary indefinitely, or for a specified period of time, for free or a nominal rent as well as participate in the discussions and decisions on the repurposing of the building. With the funds from the sale HPC could continue to worship, employ a part-time minister and remain an integral and visible part of the community through shared services and mission.

In the second chapter of Acts, the Apostle Peter quotes the prophet Joel in his first sermon. He says, "In the last days" God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old ones shall dream dreams". We are small in number which has led to a sense that in our current culture now may indeed be our last days. At the same time we are strong in Spirit and find ourselves dreaming dreams of what God can do with us and through us as a congregation. Two great strengths of this congregation have been its music program and its sense of mission.

To that end we have several ideas for the use of the funds in addition to supporting worship:

1. Refurbishing the manse as a home to be used for families either displaced by a disaster (fire, flood) or an immigrant family needing a place to nest in while they work out next steps towards citizenship.
2. Holding a summer music camp for the community lead by the talented music teachers who are members of the church. All funds above costs would go to local mission.
3. Providing a home base for the Allendale historical museum and its artifacts.
4. Providing a space for inter-faith dialog that could foster and forge peace among the Jewish, Muslim and Christian residents of Allendale and surrounding communities.
5. Serving as an outpost/center for already existent community organizations who do not have space in northern Bergen County but who have recognized needs in our area, such as the Center for Food Action etc.
6. Serving as a collection center for the Social Service Association of Ridgewood.
7. We are also quite interested in Rev. Steve Huston's idea of Highlands church serving as Ministry Outpost for Pastor's and their families.

We recognize that whatever funds we receive from this sale of the building will not make all of these dreams possible but they will help begin the process of a new vision of what the Highlands church can do for the community as well as leave a legacy to the generations to come. And if the powerful winds of the Holy Spirit blow through the congregation that there is a renewal and revival perhaps the congregation will, with great joy, have to relocate because we have outgrown our space but we will have do so knowing that we have left the village and our neighbors with a great space in which to serve the community.