

A VISION FOR BRPC IN 2017 AND BEYOND

“Growing and Serving as Disciples of Christ”

1. Summary, Welcoming, Risks of Leadership

We are a vibrant, warm, and welcoming community of faith. Those who worship here come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and would describe themselves in a rich variety of ways. We acknowledge our doubt, our struggles, and that we are all quite human and imperfect and that we are each at a unique place on our faith journey. We find our unity, our common identity, in Jesus Christ, and together seek to joyfully worship God and energetically minister to the needs of the world on God's behalf. We gather in anticipation of being transformed by the power, purpose, and presence of God among us, and go forth equipped to love God and neighbor more deeply and more wholeheartedly.

We believe that faithful leadership of a church requires being open to new possibilities, taking risks, and learning from mistakes as we try again. Honoring the past, we are convinced that God calls us to a new future.

2. Worship, Music

Joyful and Spirit-filled worship of our Almighty God is the center of our life together. “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness . . .” (Psalm 100:1-2) The heritage of a deeply Christ-centered worship and music program continues to serve as a focal point of every week's activities. Seeking to include and spiritually feed people with a broad range of needs and backgrounds, we have two services on Sunday morning, one of a more traditional approach and the other more contemporary. Music is energizing and inspiring during both of the services. Inspiring preaching helps connect the good news of Christ with the hunger and hope that is deep within us during these stressful and uncertain times. Worship attendance has grown from about 275 each week to 400. Though not requiring it, our schedule allows for everyone to participate each Sunday morning in both worship and Christian education offerings. The primary focus of adult education is Christian spiritual formation. We emphasize the importance of not only gaining knowledge of God, but also nurturing belief and a relationship with God.

3. Christian Education and Spiritual Formation

Christian education serves as a centerpiece of church programming. A high percentage (75% of school age children and youth, 50% of adults) are engaged in Christian educational offerings, many in the form of small groups. Small groups take many forms and meet the need of friendship as well as spiritual growth. Youth ministry for middle school and high school youth is vibrant and growing, with many participants coming from other faith traditions or no faith tradition at all. The summer work camp continues to be a life-defining event for many of our young people. Preparation for active church membership and affirmation of one's personal faith happens through a 1-2 month long program for adults and a year-long journey for youth. Membership at our church means something. It is a significant and intentional commitment to Christ and to one another. Through weekly worship, involvement in small groups or classes that nurture spiritual growth, serving others, and generous giving, members are drawn closer to God and one another through their engagement in the life of this faith community.

4. Mutual Caring, Loving One Another

Mutual caring for the well-being of one another, the extended church family, and our neighbors, continues as a strong value and ministry. This is provided through pastoral attention, a Deacon Ministry, Stephen Ministry, joyful fellowship gatherings, and a culture of concern and action throughout the congregation. A sense of knowing others and being known, an experience of being in community together, profoundly blesses us.

5. Mission Outreach, Loving the Neighbor in Need

Mission activities have a more local emphasis, although we still meaningfully support national and international efforts. Local mission includes hands-on projects, such as Habitat for Humanity and Interfaith Hospitality Network, and much stronger interaction with other churches and community groups. Jesus taught, “Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40, MSG) And so we seek to reach out to our neighbors in need no matter what the circumstances.

6. Staff Expectations

The pastoral staff devotes substantial time to considering new possibilities that God has placed before us, and equipping and empowering church members for ministry, aiding them in discovering their spiritual gifts and hearing God’s call.

Expectations upon our pastors and other staff have become more healthy. Overwork and lack of boundaries are intentionally discouraged. Balance and self-care have become the norm and are seen as something more spiritually healthy.

7. Governance

We have embraced a new vision for governance, one which calls for a smaller Session to see themselves and act primarily as spiritual leaders, charged with a ministry of leading the church forward. This model separates day-to-day management of ministries from spiritual leadership by Session. Instead of becoming burned out or burdened by their leadership commitments, folks become energized and spiritually fed. The new structure enables broader participation in and continuity of council leadership.

8. Capital Campaign and Facility Needs

A capital fund drive, initiated in 2015, successfully raised funds needed to modernize Westminster Hall and to upgrade the Chapel and Church House Parlor, as well as other initiatives that support the 2017 vision.

9. Closing and Mission Statement

With a staff of highly qualified personnel – a mixture of full time and part time – providing stability with little turnover, the church is blessed to have been able to move forward in response to God’s call in these years of challenge and possibility. We have re-embraced the core identity of being a disciple-making community of faith, guiding men and women and young people toward a deeper commitment to and love for Christ (the “growing” part of our brief mission statement at the top), and toward energetically caring for the needs of this hurting world on Christ’s behalf (the “serving” part). We are not apologetic or sheepish about this identity. We are humble, and grateful, and filled with joy.