

**New Beginnings at the Downtown Presbyterian Church
Group Facilitators' Report to the Session
November 5, 2015**

Executive Summary

The New Beginnings process has identified a sense of energy, enthusiasm and hunger for growth within the congregation of Downtown Presbyterian Church. It has also given voice to widespread weariness and concern.

The good news is that passion within the congregation seems to align with the interests that those in our immediate neighborhood likely share. Even better, those interests are, in the broadest terms, along the same lines as our existing ministries: social justice, service, and the arts. We've been working in the right directions, at least in theory. However, it seems the time has come for reimagining and restructuring, deepening and broadening the way those ministries work.

To do that, we must be a congregation that continually centers and nurtures itself. There is a clear desire to make sure spiritual development is at the heart of all we do. No more can we let practical matters edge out deep efforts at discipleship and nurturing each other. At the same time, we must thoughtfully reevaluate the way our internal organization is structured and how we allocate work so that we don't continue a cycle of burning out some while leaving others disengaged and under- or poorly-utilized.

We cannot go it alone. It's time to seek out meaningful working relationships with other congregations and organizations. We are not the only ones trying to further kindness, social justice, and creative expression in Nashville. Our resources can be better utilized when we join hands with likeminded friends. Partnerships with outside groups have the potential to create additional opportunities for our members to serve the community in meaningful ways. Likewise, inviting the community in to use our space as a place for unpacking big ideas and finding new steps forward can only enrich and feed our internal sense of mission.

This is a report that is ultimately filled with hope and optimism. It does identify stumbling blocks, and some of them are large. But great things can happen yet at the corner of 5th and Church, and this congregation has the vision to make them happen.