

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

4
5 **Introduction**

6
7 The following report presents to the Session the results of a discernment process
8 involving high levels of participation by the congregation over several months. From the
9 well-attended "Appreciative Inquiry" session in April through the group meetings in
10 August and September, a large part of our church has made an enormous commitment
11 of time and energy to the New Beginnings process.

12
13 The eight small groups contributing to this report comprised 56 participants and were
14 facilitated by Claire Armbruster and Jeff Koontz, Ruth Butler and Amy Sterling, Chuck
15 and Nina Cardona, Joel Dark and Cary Gibson, Faye and Jim Dickson, Michael Korak and
16 Pam Swoner, Geoff Little, and Sharon Michie. Each group met for six sessions, many of
17 which ran for three hours.

18
19 This report summarizes the insights, conclusions, and recommendations of these New
20 Beginnings conversations as discerned by group facilitators. Although discussions
21 included a rich variety of viewpoints, we have been impressed by points of strong
22 consensus both within and among our groups.

23
24 It is clear that members of the Downtown Presbyterian Church care deeply about its
25 future and have embraced the opportunity to express themselves through the New
26 Beginnings process. It is our hope that through this report their concerns and hopes will
27 be heard.

28
29 **Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses**

30
31 The final question of the New Beginnings report template asks facilitators to "rate the
32 overall attitude of your group at the end of your sessions" on a scale of adjectives
33 including "optimistic, pessimistic, resistant, eager & willing, nervous, etc."

34
35 All facilitators who responded to this question, representing seven of the eight New
36 Beginnings groups, indicated that their group members were "optimistic" about the
37 future of the DPC.

38
39 The prevalence of this optimism – remarkable given the range of difficult issues and
40 challenges identified through the intensive New Beginnings process – attests to a
41 widespread belief in the church's capacity for positive change and a willingness of our
42 members to give their time and energy to this transformation.

45

46 **Strengths**

47

48 A central, recurring theme of New Beginnings is the determination of a church's
49 strengths in terms of "Passion," "Resources," and "Best At" [effectiveness].

50

51 New Beginnings groups consistently rated "Passion" as our church's greatest strength.

52

53 DPC has been greatly blessed with members who care about the church itself, their
54 fellow members, social justice, and the arts. DPC members are clearly willing to invest
55 themselves in our ministries and seek hands-on opportunities to make a difference in
56 the lives of others.

57

58 While the current congregation is not particularly well-matched demographically to the
59 dominant groups living inside the mapped area offered by the New Beginnings
60 assessment, our liturgical worship, arts ministry, passion for social justice and a hunger
61 for authenticity correspond very well to the psychographic profiles of the two dominant
62 MOSAIC lifestyle groups: "G" and "O." (See Appendix: "Who Are DPC's Neighbors?").
63 We are already welcoming an increasing proportion of visitors who have walked to
64 church because they live nearby.

65

66 Despite current financial concerns, there is also considerable latent potential both in our
67 facilities and our human resources to initiate an effective ministry while generating
68 much-needed income.

69

70 **Weaknesses**

71

72 In order to maximize our strengths, however, DPC must be willing to confront boldly and
73 urgently a range of serious and systemic weaknesses that frustrate our potential and
74 stand in the way of our growth. These weaknesses include the use of our "Resources"
75 but even more importantly involve critical issues of effectiveness ("Best At").

76

77 Major weaknesses of our church include:

78

- 79 • Lack of Spiritual Nurturing

80

81 DPC is insufficiently attentive to the spiritual health, development, and growth of
82 its members and community.

83

84 The consequences of a longer-term neglect of spiritual care amidst the church's
85 high level of activity were made especially acute by the challenges, changes, and
86 emotional distress of 2014, which would likely have been difficult to navigate
87 even for more spiritually nurtured congregations.

88

89 Our pastor, Rev. Mike Wilson, continues to build relationships of trust, based on
90 healthy pastoral boundaries, particularly with members in need of spiritual and
91 relational healing. As individuals and a community in need of ongoing spiritual
92 care, we are long overdue for the cathartic "soul searching" New Beginnings has
93 offered. Many have embraced this opportunity with honest realism *and*
94 determined hope for our future.

95
96 We need to build on this work and center faith and discipleship at the core of
97 our congregational life.

98 • Lack of Communication and Transparency

99

100 DPC suffers from the informal approaches to communication characteristic of
101 small congregations but insufficient for the mission of a growing, downtown
102 church. For newer, or even older, members to have confidence in the church,
103 they need to know what its values and vision are, what the Session is doing, and
104 how they can become involved in the church's mission. There is a perception
105 that, "We [members] don't know what they [Session] are doing and they don't
106 know what we want."

107

108 • (Com)Passion/Committee Fatigue

109

110 Our model for Session and committee activities traps leaders and volunteers in a
111 fatiguing cycle – focusing on minutia in meetings, developing little institutional
112 memory, and squeezing out spiritual development – yet we persist in
113 perpetuating this ineffective and unsustainable system.

114

115 DPC also tends to allow individuals over time to become burdened with and/or
116 possessive of programs that should be corporately shared.

117

118 • Neglect of Members' Passions, Values, and Interests

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120 We are not matching the passions in our congregation with appropriately
121 prioritized outlets and activities, resulting in considerable untapped potential
122 and the widespread experience of congregational fatigue noted above.

123

124 • Insularity

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126 DPC tends to "go it alone" in ministry, relying excessively on its small
127 membership, rather than working effectively with other churches, organizations
128 and networks.

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- Nostalgia and Inertia

DPC shares with many other churches a tendency to sustain past practices rather than making the kind of "bold decisions" essential for a sustainable future because, "We've always done things *this way*."

The widespread optimism noted above is accompanied by considerable caution and anxiety about our capacity and commitment to make hard decisions and necessary changes. Faced with the opportunity to transform our congregational mission, there is concern that our current structures and practices are not adequately serving (and in some cases are detrimental to) our needs and current mission. If these are not serving us well in the present, there is fear that they will be inadequate to building a vibrant future.

- Homelessness "Ministry by Proxy"

The church's prominent homelessness ministry lacks Session leadership, involves very few members of the congregation, and is insufficiently connected with those organizations in Nashville facilitating solution-based paths out of homelessness and advocacy to reduce or end homelessness.

New Beginnings participants strongly value the church's past and potential involvement in homelessness ministry and advocacy, including its relationship with *The Contributor*, but recognize a critical need for management, leadership, and professional skills in this ministry for its own health as well as that of the congregation.

- Unambitious Stewardship of Our Facilities and Assets

Notwithstanding related challenges, DPC's buildings, property, and endowment are resources that far exceed the assets of most other churches and should be used to advance the church's ministries.

The use of the "Parable of the Talents" in the New Beginnings process was almost uncannily appropriate for reflection on missed opportunities and future opportunities to use our resources ambitiously and imaginatively for the welfare of our congregation and ministry to our community. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, parking and the use of our buildings.

Decision for "Mission Redefinition": Connecting Our Passions with Our Community

The three decision choices presented by the New Beginnings process include: "Stay the Same / Do Nothing," "Mission Redefinition," and "Redevelopment." (The

171 "Redevelopment" option is subdivided into "Relocation," "Restart," "Parallel Start,"
172 "Adoption," and "Sale of Facilities with Lease-back Agreement.")
173 The vast majority of participants in the New Beginnings conversations have
174 recommended that DPC pursue "Mission Redefinition."
175
176 Other choices discussed – either as an alternative to "Mission Redefinition" or in
177 support of it – included "Redevelopment" (by far the most prevalent second option),
178 "Restart," "Adoption," and (although not technically a New Beginnings choice)
179 "Rebranding." "Adoption" was considered primarily in terms of a financial rationale. The
180 rationale for the other three choices was the need for robust, extensive, clear, and
181 visible transformation.
182
183 The rationale for the primary choice of "Mission Redefinition" is the belief that DPC has
184 the capacity and the potential to align its priorities:
185
186 (1) internally - with the passions, values, and interests of its members and
187
188 (2) externally - with the needs of a large and growing local community.
189
190 We are a small congregation, but we worship in a large, historic, landmark building in a
191 rapidly growing and developing downtown environment. This context presents us with
192 challenges beyond those that might face a suburban congregation of a similar size and
193 places significant demands on our existing resources, but it also opens an exciting range
194 of opportunities. Our key challenge is bridging the gap between where we are now and
195 where we *could* be.
196
197 While we are currently facing cash flow concerns, DPC has a wealth of resources and a
198 purpose beyond a financial return on investment. We invest in an education coordinator
199 because we value our children and see the fruit of this investment in their enthusiasm
200 for an authentic faith creatively expressed. The decision for "Mission Redefinition" is a
201 decision to invest similarly in the future of our congregation and in the future of our
202 community.
203
204 Further, we have a range of opportunities to develop sustainable income streams. To do
205 so, requires significant revitalization through decisive changes in our organizational
206 structures, assumptions, and facilities. "Mission Redefinition" can unlock these
207 possibilities.
208
209 While it is the responsibility of Session to guide the redefinition of DPC's mission,
210 participants in New Beginnings brought forward several bold and imaginative ideas. We
211 present here the broad shape of the vision for DPC's future that has emerged through
212 our conversations.
213
214

214 **1. Centering Spiritual Care and Growth – Our Congregation**

215

216 We have the opportunity and a responsibility to redefine and improve the **internal**
217 **mission** of ministry to our congregation.

218

219 Care for the spiritual growth, nourishment and wellbeing of the DPC congregation needs
220 to move from the confines of the Sunday morning service to the center of the church's
221 identity, imagination, and activity. This will form a spiritually and emotionally healthy
222 foundation on which to faithfully and energetically respond to God's call for a bold
223 renewed mission.

224

225 Our Session needs to transition from its primarily administrative functions to a vision of
226 pastoral care, spiritual vision, and leadership. The spiritual wellbeing of the
227 congregation is a shared and mutual responsibility.

228

229 Given the backgrounds of many of our congregants, we must honor and minister to the
230 courage and trust it takes to enter DPC (or indeed any church) on the part of those who
231 have left harmful church experiences and need to experience deep healing. Trust is
232 fragile, and spiritual healing is a long process that does not happen by accident.

233

234 An obvious place to center spiritual renewal, outside of our worship services, is in our
235 (adult) educational program. This ministry needs to offer sacred and protected spaces
236 for mutual learning and relational development (i.e., some groups that intentionally
237 avoid free-for-all participation so that can programs and be tailored to participants and
238 relationships of trust can be developed). Engaging spaces of this kind need to be created
239 throughout the week for various groups and specifically for newcomers with MOSAIC
240 groups "G" and "O" in mind.

241

242 The *duty of care* in our educational and other programs extends beyond the need to
243 protect our children and youth from harm. New Beginnings sessions are not designed to
244 be a psychotherapeutic space, but traditionally marginalized groups in our congregation,
245 including women and members of the LGBTQ community, have cited through this
246 process damaging experiences of alienation and/or spiritual harm. Intentional corporate
247 effort is essential to ensuring that distinct safer spaces for sharing/learning, which our
248 current "open to any and all" model has failed to provide, are created and fostered for
249 the long term.

250

251 As a congregation, we are like a family. We need to strengthen our family ties within
252 and also strengthen mutually supportive family ties with our sister churches around
253 Nashville, particularly those who share our mission values and our progressively
254 oriented expression of Christian faith and discipleship.

255

256

256 **2. Centering Spiritual Care and Growth – Our Community**

257

258 As a growing population establishes itself downtown, we have an opportunity to offer
259 our new neighbors both a spiritual home and a values-based conversation about what
260 the character of this emerging community will be.

261

262 Our downtown community includes the homeless, a demographically diverse group of
263 commuters, and a growing neighborhood of residents. DPC can be a sanctuary of peace
264 and fellowship for our downtown community both on and outside of a Sunday morning.
265 But beyond questions of whether we might offer additional worship spaces such as a
266 Saturday service, or what Christian education model we use, there is an opportunity to
267 be proactive and intentional about authentically and meaningfully connecting with
268 those who are in need of a spiritual haven.

269

270 We need to listen to our neighbors carefully if we are to address their spiritual needs.
271 The New Beginnings process has opened up a window onto the kind of mission that can
272 hold meaning for MOSAIC groups "G" and "O". Our mission needs to be focused on the
273 reality of our surrounding community as it is rather than on an imagined congregation
274 that looks, acts, and believes just like our longstanding members.

275

276 Such listening must recognize that MOSAIC groups "G" and "O" have statistically high
277 levels of progressive and socially oriented ethics matched by deep skepticism and
278 mistrust of Christian churches as a force for good in society. Our mission therefore
279 cannot assume that we in DPC will be given the benefit of the doubt simply because we
280 know we are not a fundamentalist megachurch.

281

282 Research shows that non-churchgoers and indeed many Christian young people
283 increasingly perceive very little difference between denominations or types of churches.
284 We must therefore clearly and visibly express and embody our common values and
285 passions with those we seek to serve and welcome. Our mission must be grounded in
286 these values and passions rather than in a desire to get more members for financial
287 liquidity's sake.

288

289 **3. Communication and Transparency**

290

291 In a rapidly growing and changing city, DPC must communicate its values, priorities,
292 mission, and relevance clearly and openly. Both as a church and as a non-profit
293 organization, we are one option among many for those seeking institutions and
294 activities worthy of their interest and commitment. Rather than resting on our history,
295 our reputation, or religious assumptions, we need to be transparent both internally and
296 externally.

297

298 Internally, the Session needs to communicate its leadership vision, both broadly and
299 specifically, to the congregation rather than taking the trust and support of members for

300 granted. Minutes of Session meetings should be published, not only for purposes of
301 accountability but also as an opportunity for the congregation to have an ongoing
302 interest in the work of its leadership. Clear communication of the Session's goals for the
303 church and regularly reporting of progress toward these goals is especially critical for
304 the progress of New Beginnings "Mission Redefinition."
305

306 Externally, in the words of one New Beginnings group, DPC needs to "look less like a
307 fortress." In spite of (or perhaps because of) the imposing scale of our building, people
308 are unaware of us as a worshipping community. Many neighbors and visitors assume we
309 are simply a historic building and or focused only on ministry to those who are
310 homeless. We need to "get out of the building" and make better connections in the
311 community as well as exploring how to make the building more transparent, and make
312 better use of the building's exterior spaces.
313

314 Both internally and externally, our online communications require significant upgrade
315 and ongoing enhancement. Beyond a mere marketing tool for churches, social media is
316 now itself a site of meaningful connection, ministry, and even worship. DPC needs to
317 identify models, best practices, and expertise in this area and establish an intentional,
318 active, and dynamic social media presence.
319

320 **4. Engaging Our Membership**

321
322 New Beginnings groups consistently expressed concern that we have been exhausting
323 our most active members and discouraging the participation of others for many years
324 through a committee system and schedule of activities that consumes excessive time,
325 effort, and energy.
326

327 One alternative emerging from New Beginnings discussions was the possible adoption of
328 a deaconate model, which might have the potential both to free the time of Session
329 members for spiritual leadership and to reduce the size and number of church
330 committees.
331

332 Much more fundamental than organizational structure, however, is the need for
333 "smarter" and more adaptable leadership and processes – prioritizing, planning,
334 leadership training, institutional memory, flexible team building (rather than permanent
335 committees), etc.
336

337 DPC needs to reevaluate its committee system – which slots church members into pre-
338 established functions and commits them to long, routine meetings in support of
339 recurring annual activities – in favor of an approach that begins with and builds on their
340 skills, gifts, and potential for ministry to our community.
341

342 It is an outmoded model of ministry that assumes a program is effective if lots of people
343 are all involved on a permanent basis. In exercising spiritual care for the congregation,

344 the Session should prioritize activities and programs that genuinely match these
345 passions and opportunities, not just those of the previous year. These corporately
346 owned activities and programs should be grounded in the church's mission, moving us
347 forward (rather than 'round and 'round), as a community. Participants should receive
348 training and experience spiritual connection, nurture, and growth through their
349 involvement in our mission.

350

351 **5. Reimagining Outreach – Connecting with Community Partners**

352

353 As noted above, one of DPC's critical weaknesses is a tendency to "go it alone." In order
354 to realize an accountable, effective, and results-oriented mission, our model of social
355 justice must be rooted in meaningful and engaging partnerships that are purpose-built
356 and nurtured from the ground up. This includes the strengthening of relationships both
357 with current tenant organizations in our building and with other Outreach partners.

358

359 In adopting a more missional model of ministry, we do not need to reinvent the wheel
360 or replicate work being done by others. Rather, we need to connect meaningfully in
361 coalition with other organization, equipping members to make and foster those
362 connections and partnerships. Members who participate in social justice advocacy and
363 community service should have simple avenues for sharing these experiences within
364 DPC and should be encouraged to do so.

365

366 We cannot transform our church or our community in isolation. We need to reach out
367 to other urban churches nationally and learn from the experiences of those that have
368 successfully redefined their mission and/or redeveloped their facilities to pursue their
369 mission.

370

371 This process should not only gather information but should also work to establish a
372 range of supportive connections – with the denomination via the Presbytery, with other
373 PC(USA) churches, with local sister churches, and with local non-profits, agencies, and
374 networks – within which we can learn and share our own competencies.

375

376 Partnerships provide DPC with an important avenue to overcome some of its limitations
377 as a historically and predominantly white and affluent church. Building meaningful
378 partnerships with churches and organizations that effectively serve and engage MOSAIC
379 group "R" ("multicultural, low-income singles, and single parents") is an important first
380 step toward becoming good neighbors of these members of our downtown community.

381

382 This learning is intended to be ongoing and will support DPC in becoming more
383 adaptable to change. It will develop mutually enhancing relationships with other
384 churches facing common challenges and pursuing similar missions. Wherever good work
385 is being modeled, we should be hungry to learn from others' experiences and expertise.
386 We should consistently open to making cooperative and collaborative connections,
387 valuing and sharing new knowledge throughout our congregation and our community.

388

389 **6. Reimagining Outreach – Connecting People to People**

390

391 DPC's location, ministries, and reputation position the church well to become a beacon
392 and point of connection for downtown residents and others committed to values-based
393 conversation, social justice, and putting the gospel into action.

394

395 The dominant MOSAIC lifestyle groups living in our surrounding neighborhoods ("G" and
396 "O") share skepticism toward religion and a disinclination to join churches as members
397 but have high levels of energy and social ethical vision. Churches that build relationships
398 with this population need to be highly adaptable, web-savvy, and focused on genuine,
399 positive outcomes for the community.

400

401 Although liturgical worship has value for these groups, traditional church, in the sense of
402 "meeting in a parlor," is significantly less appealing. To connect with and engage with
403 these groups, DPC must move beyond its building while also reimagining our space as a
404 "hub" for dynamic, action- and mission-focused energy.

405

406 We should value our capacity to serve others by being a hospitable space to hold their
407 AA meetings, gatherings of concerned citizens, or creative groups needing space to
408 collaborate. There is considerable scope as the downtown residential community
409 establishes itself for actively offering our facilities to our partners and other local
410 community groups for gatherings, events, and town hall meetings.

411

412 We should seek to be a supportive space where people can connect with people –
413 around their shared values, interests and goals. In this way we can play a part in the
414 development of genuine community, not apart from it. Our local neighbors should feel a
415 sense of identification with our building – knowing that we stand with and for a vibrant,
416 diverse, and well-integrated community and that we welcome our neighbors using our
417 facilities to foster good community spirit and relationships.

418

419 **7. Reimagining Outreach – Our Homelessness Ministries**

420

421 DPC members strongly and consistently value the church's commitments to people
422 experiencing homelessness and urgently desire the development of these activities into
423 an organized, professional, solutions-focused, spiritually caring ministry fully grounded
424 in the church's mission, guided by its Session, and connected to the congregation.

425

426 The church's outreach to those experiencing homelessness should be guided by the
427 question of how best to serve their needs and address their concerns. A prevalent and
428 strong theme of New Beginnings conversations was the urgent need of DPC's
429 homelessness ministries for structure, professional standards, and best practices for
430 volunteer management and the provision of services. One possibility suggested for

431 addressing this concern was the creation of a non-profit organization for our poverty-
432 focused ministries.

433

434 Beyond these immediate needs, New Beginnings groups also see in the church's
435 homelessness ministries an opportunity to intentionally partner with others who are
436 already doing good work with determination, intention, and effectiveness. The form of
437 our ministries should be guided by how we can best use our collective social power,
438 visibility, energy, and resources to work in coalition with others towards solutions that
439 break cycles of poverty and displacement.

440

441 One suggestion, exemplary of other creative approaches, is that our meals could
442 become a "think tank" space for people to be able to meet and discuss issues of concern
443 and self-advocate. There is a large coalition of agencies and organizations working on
444 issues of poverty in the city. We could potentially help that coalition by starting with *The*
445 *Contributor* and Open Table to center the voices of those experiencing homelessness in
446 this conversation.

447

448 The context for our homelessness ministries should be a spiritually healthy, serving
449 community open to coalition and collaboration with ministry partners. This spiritual
450 health and openness should be the motivation for these ministries, the basis for
451 decision-making within them, and their outcome.

452

453 **8. Deepening Engagement with the Arts**

454

455 In the vision of DPC as a transparent, connective, and active space, our arts program
456 both a "window" and a "door" into the church for our neighbors. DPC has a distinctive
457 ministry and well-established identity in supporting the arts as vital to human
458 expression, reflection, and dialogue. While this ministry has continuously adapted for
459 over twenty years alongside the residency program, New Beginnings conversations
460 reveal that it remains highly valued both within the congregation and for the
461 connections it affords with the wider community.

462

463 The importance of the arts at DPC includes the longstanding benefits of our artist
464 residency program, the more recent success of the Browsing Room gallery as the first
465 official stop on the Art Crawl map, and the potential for the church of our prime site at
466 the gateway to the flourishing and expanding downtown Arts District. Engagement with
467 the arts is clearly, in New Beginnings terms, one of our "Best At" ministries, and future
468 planning, including any facilities redevelopment, should recognize and support the
469 strength of our arts programs.

470

471 Urban progressive churches across the country that highlight the arts in their mission
472 have proven successful in reaching the same demographic communities we now see
473 setting up home in downtown. Thus the presence of both creative and gallery space on
474 our property should be seen as a unique and original "DPC way" to connect and engage

475 with our neighbors. We should build as extensively and ambitiously as possible on the
476 success of our renewed engagement in the downtown Art Crawl and the visibility it
477 affords us.

478

479 Imaginative participant recommendations for new artistic avenues include developing a
480 program for our members and worshippers to more deeply explore and engage with the
481 arts as a form of spiritual practice and allowing that approach to feed into our worship
482 program. The residency program has always sought to extend the fullest possible (non-
483 prescriptive) freedom of expression to its artists, but for those resident artists who do
484 share the church's interest in the intersection of art and faith, there is clearly room for
485 inviting their collaboration in developing opportunities for congregational programs.

486

487 There is also scope to develop the use of art around the outside the church.
488 Continuing on the theme of "getting out of the building" and making it clear that we are
489 an active worshipping community, we should explore creative opportunities to have a
490 visible and active presence in the abundance of downtown cultural festivals throughout
491 the year.

492

493 **9. Using Our Physical Resources – Events**

494

495 As indicated above, insufficiently proactive and ambitious stewardship of our physical
496 and financial assets is among the major weaknesses, and thus potential opportunities,
497 identified in the New Beginnings process. These issues, however, are intentionally listed
498 last, both in the "weaknesses" section of this report and in presenting our ideas for the
499 church's future. DPC is a church with a building, not a building with a church, and plans
500 for the future of our facilities must begin with a vision for our congregation and our
501 community.

502

503 The reputation of our highly creative congregation and the uniqueness of our sanctuary
504 have made DPC a desirable venue for musical recordings and performances, large
505 meetings, and other events. After witnessing the strong recent successes (another "Best
506 At") of programs including the Shower of Stoles in early 2015, an author event by Nadia
507 Bolz-Weber, the Americana Fest shows, as well as (albeit off site) popularity of an event
508 like Beer and Hymns, we recognize the very high value of, and potential for, DPC as a
509 unique cultural event space in the heart of downtown.

510

511 New Beginnings groups strongly recommend that that we seek to develop a seasonal
512 program of scheduled ticketed events for the public. Not all need be theological, but
513 they should consistent with our values and mission.

514

515 We have an opportunity to offer our spaces for no charge towards community and
516 missional goals. Our prime location and unique setting create considerable
517 opportunities, whether by donations, offerings, or tickets, for a potentially significant

518 income stream from some of our events if this program is managed to professional
519 standards.

520

521 Two specific recommendations that arose to this end are that we explore the potential
522 for (1) creating a non-profit organization, accountable to the Session, to manage the
523 entire arts and cultural events program and funding in the church and (2) hiring an
524 events coordinator to maximize the regular use of our Sanctuary as a venue run in line
525 with industry standards for performance and speaking events.

526

527 **10. Using Our Physical Resources – Our Buildings**

528

529 Many of the recommendations offered by participant groups point to significant
530 changes in the way we conceive of and practically use our facilities, and a number of
531 these also involve the fundamental transformation of space.

532

533 While it is tempting to see such changes primarily in financial terms, we offer these
534 ideas in the context of – rather than as a cathartic substitute for – deeper decisions
535 about our congregations and its mission.

536

537 Some of the ambitiously creative suggestions for our buildings emerging from New
538 Beginnings include:

539

540 (1) renovation, redevelopment, or demolition of our education building, including the
541 possible partial sale or lease of this property;

542

543 (2) the construction or purchase of parking facilities;

544

545 (3) the conversion of the Fellowship Hall or a part of the education building into a café –
546 similar to (or perhaps even a location for) the Thistle Stop Lunch Café – and/or other
547 space for creative community use; and

548

549 (4) the intentional design of space for the arts in any major redevelopment project.

550

551 Plans about our property need to be carefully and professionally researched with the
552 full consideration of multiple options, attention to financial feasibility, strong regard for
553 the history and architectural integrity of our buildings, and a commitment to minimal
554 disruption of our ministries.

555

556 **Moving Forward: DPC's Future Story and Next Steps**

557

558 During the final session of the New Beginnings conversations, groups were asked to
559 imagine the kind of story that could be written about the church "five or ten years into
560 the future," and this wide range of dates corresponds approximately to the timeframe
561 of establishing the ambitious vision outlined in this report.

562

563 Progress on some of the report's recommendations, including very important ideas, can
564 be realized very quickly, and evidence of this progress is vital to the longer-term of the
565 church in the view of many New Beginnings participants. We recognize, however, that
566 many of our recommendations require further precision, research, evaluation, and
567 professional consultation even before efforts to bring them about.

568

569 Although this report has gone far beyond the simple selection of a choice among three
570 options, it is not intended as a statement of the church's mission or specific directions
571 for its future, both of which need to be developed by our Session.

572

573 The role of New Beginnings group facilitators in this process is also a decision for our
574 Session, but we would like to request that it consider:

575

576 (1) the preparation of a response to this report including a timetable for shorter-term
577 and longer-term action items,

578

579 (2) inviting our pastor to offer a response sharing his own vision and ideas,

580

581 (3) convening a congregational meeting to discuss the plans of the Session emerging
582 from New Beginnings, and

583

584 (4) the selection of a small group of New Beginnings representatives to continue to
585 assess the progress toward the vision emerging from this report and these discussions.

**Who are DPC's neighbors?
What do they think about religion? How do churches reach them?**

In our New Beginnings Assessment Report (specifically pgs. 17-21 & Appendices C & D) we have a considerable amount of demographic information to consider, particularly about the top 3 MOSAIC groups in DPC's geographical study area¹.

On handout #3-2 there is a reference to MOSAIC "description guides" provided on the Mission Insite website.^{2 3}

These MOSAIC descriptions add to our data pile but these have a particular focus on *the attitudes about and toward religion* of our top 3 groups. They also suggest *relevant ministry choices* for reaching out to those groups.

As explained on p. 19 of our Assessment Report, the top 3 MOSAIC lifestyle segments in the study area around DPC are:

- 1st O54 Striving Single Scene (a segment of Group O, "Singles and Starters")
- 2nd G25 Urban Edge (a segment of Group G, "Young Solos")
- 3rd R67 Hope For Tomorrow (a segment of Group R, "Aspirational Fusion")

(Note: our 4th and 5th largest groups are O52 & G24 respectively. Information on Group O and Group G also applies to them.)

If you feel overwhelmed by so much data (!) what follows below is a **very** brief snapshot of the Mission Insite descriptions of our top 3 demographic neighbors.

O54 The Striving Single Scene

Young singles starting out, & some starter families, in diverse urban communities.

Religious Perspective: "Looking for heroes of faith"

Key Behaviors:
High energy
Contagious enthusiasm
Online
Music soundtrack in the background

Strong Impressions:
Progressive
Sociable
Fulfillment

¹ See map on page 18 of the assessment report.

² <http://missioninsite.com/missionimpact-guide/>

³ The full descriptions of Groups O, G & R and Segments O54, G25 & R67 are also available here: <https://www.dropbox.com/home/New%20Beginnings/DPC%20Session%203%20materials>

High drive for affluence
High pursuit of personal growth

O54 contd./

Worth highlighting:

- ❖ Relationships with friends are extremely important
- ❖ Relationship with a credible spiritual leader is often key to awakening their spiritual interest... Christian religious leaders that are credible to this group tend to be allied with a great cause, radically accepting of all cultures and lifestyles.
- ❖ Churches that do reach segments in lifestyle Group O tend to be small, mobile & adaptable. They are not limited by high overhead for property or personnel and are very creative in their programming. These churches may be good at rapidly initiating creative ideas... but they are even better at decisively terminating ineffective tactics. They aggressively eliminate their “sacred cows” and are very clear about their “sacred essentials”.
- ❖ These people often do not even consider looking for a good church. However they are looking for “heroes”. Clearly this is a challenge for traditional churches and clergy. These people have strong instincts for detecting hypocrisy yet this challenge can be addressed. People in this group respond very positively to spiritual leaders like Pope Francis or Christian leaders who lead political, environmental, social and economic movements that change the world.

G25 The Urban Edge

Young and middle aged singles living active and energetic lifestyles in metropolitan areas.

Religious Perspective: “Spiritual truth is buried beneath an avalanche of religious hypocrisy”

Key Behaviors: Web savvy
Self-indulgent
Ardent social activism

Strong Impressions: Global
Progressive
Fulfillment
High practice of altruism and giving
High entertainment activities

Worth highlighting:

- ❖ Attitudes towards the church usually range from indifferent to hostile. Spirituality may be of some interest but this group tends to be rationalistic and highly attuned to any whiff of hypocrisy... God or Spirit may exist but authentic spirituality is hidden behind or underneath religion.

- ❖ Some may have personal history regarding religious abuse.
- ❖ Have a very strong social conscience and a high standard of ethical behavior. It takes a great deal of work to establish credibility with this group and credibility can be lost very quickly.
- ❖ They may connect with the church on certain conditions: The pastor or spiritual leader must be of high moral character, particularly passionate about equality and human rights, must respect other faiths, and may be ambiguous about God in the goal of history.
- ❖ They may connect with a church strongly connected to social causes
- ❖ The aesthetic side is also important to people in this lifestyle segment. If they connect with a church, it may be with a church with artistic expressions.

R67 The Hoppers for Tomorrow

Multi-cultural, low-income singles and single parents living in urban locations and striving to make a better life.

Religious Perspective: “If you happen to meet God, tell him I need a break!”

Key Behaviors: Unmarried
Often overwhelmed
Apathetic but dreaming big

Strong Impressions: Indulgent
Spontaneous
Self
Low commitment to career
Desire to broaden horizons
Sense of well-being

Worth highlighting:

- ❖ This group may avoid the church because they fear their children may be indoctrinated and their lifestyles judged. When they do connect with the church it is often through an outreach ministry, like day care, food pantry or emergency help.
- ❖ Faith may still be important for this group... they are looking for hope and are hoping to get a break. They can blossom in an atmosphere and genuine acceptance, practical support and optimistic attitudes.
- ❖ While they may show up at a worship service they may really want to access social services and this seems the less stressful way to do it. They are less likely to come to worship for the sake of the worship service itself... and are apt to leave early, abruptly or immediately once it is over.
- ❖ The churches that are most successful at reaching people in this group tend to be very committed to social services. They provide programs to help people survive, and often help people complete high school education, or find specialized training for a future career.⁴

⁴ These supplemental notes were prepared by Sonua Bohannon & Cary Gibson.

**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.