



June 19, 2020

To: Columbia Presbyterian Church Session  
From: CPC Mission Study Team

Subj: 2020 Columbia Presbyterian Church Mission Study

In November 2019 the Session of CPC formed the Mission Study Team to conduct a Mission Study of Columbia Presbyterian Church to support the transition following the retirement of the Reverend Doctor Thomas Fitzsimons Neal as Senior Pastor/Head of Staff in August 2020. The session recommended a timeline for completion in June 2020.

The team reviewed the CPC's development of mission and vision over the past five years and studied the book "Memories, Hopes, And Conversations; Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change" by Mark Lau Branson to guide us in our approach. We engaged the CPC congregation via a survey and focus groups to establish a foundation and hear the congregation's stories of what they valued in Columbia. The survey used was similar to the one conducted in 2006 and allowed us to see the changes in CPC in the intervening 14 years. The focus groups were conducted electronically due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

This report is submitted as our response to our task.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mission Study Team  
June 2020  
Report to Session

**Executive Summary**

Our CPC Faith Community is in a season of transition. It is also a season of challenges and uncertainty. The Mission Study Committee brings this study to the CPC Faith Community as a testament to the certainty of our ability to transform and grow as a community of faith. And we're excited to see how God leads us into our future.

Through this process, we have recognized and celebrate that we are *different*, and this difference enhances and strengthens our purpose:

We are focused on the cross.

We are committed to the study of scripture

We share our faith with each other and the community at large which continues to challenge us to break new ground.

We appreciate and embrace the rhythms of our faith community.

We are intergenerational

We are small groups.

We are ready to help here and around the globe.

This study summarizes who we are, where we think we are headed and how equipped we are to grow in this season of change and challenge.



### **Background:**

In October of 2019, Senior Pastor Fitz Neal disclosed to the session his plan for retirement in 2020. In November 2019, the Mission Study Team was formed by the Session. Matt Overton, Associate Pastor, helped guide and initiate the team.

### **Our Process:**

We designed a two-part process to collect data and feedback from our church community.

#### **Part I: Percept Survey**

Percept is a preferred demographic resource used by hundreds of regional and national denominational agencies. Their survey process is designed to help us better understand who we are as a faith community and how to best serve the greater Clark County community, now as well as into the future.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, the Columbia Community had the opportunity to fill out the Percept survey (with paper and pencil) during designated Sunday worship times.

We encouraged as many people as possible to participate and expressed how vital it was to hear from them. We had **349** returned surveys. Most were completed in the sanctuary on March 8<sup>th</sup>. However, some were returned later in person as well as electronically.

#### **Part II: Focus Groups**

We scheduled small group discussions based on prayer and conversations around four key questions (Questions provided in the appendix at the end of this document). The questions were designed to identify through story sharing the strengths of our church, so that we continue to build a strong and Christ-serving future.

The original In-person focus group dates: March 18- 29<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday Evenings (3.18 & 3.25) and Sunday Mornings (3.22 & 3.29) were all rescheduled due to COVID 19.

Because good communication across our faith community had already begun, people were able to adapt and join us in small group conversations via the Zoom platform.

The Zoom format allowed us to meet altogether in one 'room' - where the host/moderator explained the process and purpose. We then broke off into smaller 'rooms' (one or two MST members per 3-6 focus group attendees) This allowed us to



participate in small group conversations around the 4 key questions before returning to the larger group. Sharing and reflecting on what was said from each 'room' happened as designed when we were all together. Even though we had to be flexible with our method (Zoom rather than in-person) due to the sudden and life altering Covid-19 event, we feel the integrity of the process remained intact. The conversations our faith community shared were reflective, thoughtful affirmations to the following statements:

We know our vision

We know what we value

We are aware we are called by God to serve (internally—the congregation; externally the neighborhood and our county, state, and across the globe)

#### **We know our vision:**

We as a faith community recognize the future is uncertain and that it will take all the people within our community – using all the God- given skills, passions, talents - to move us forward together. Our vision has three strong strands. Our community can speak to all these strands. They demonstrate in story sharing and in action our faith community does practice actively the CPC faith community vision:

Connect across generations

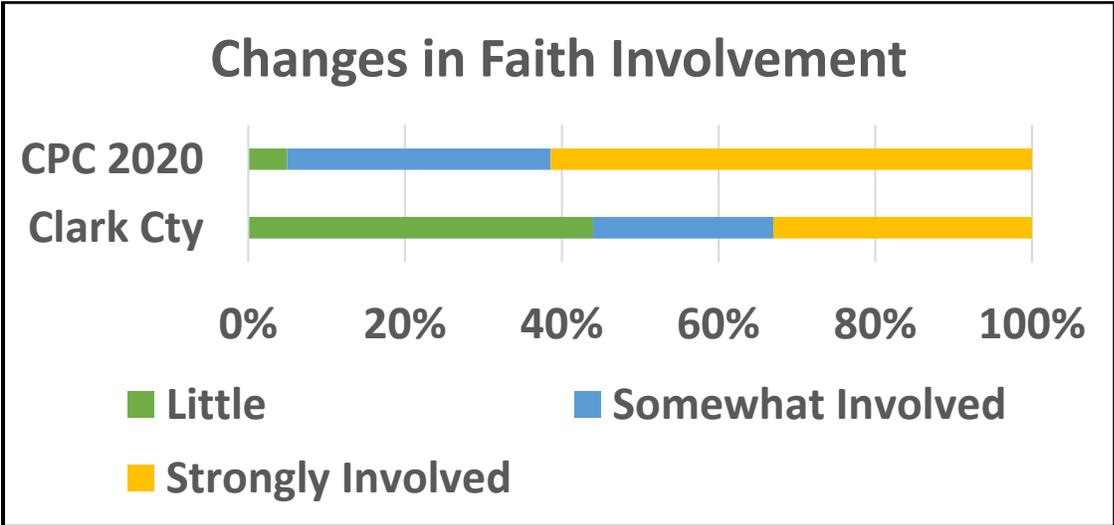
*Develop disciple makers*

Send Christ's people to bless the world

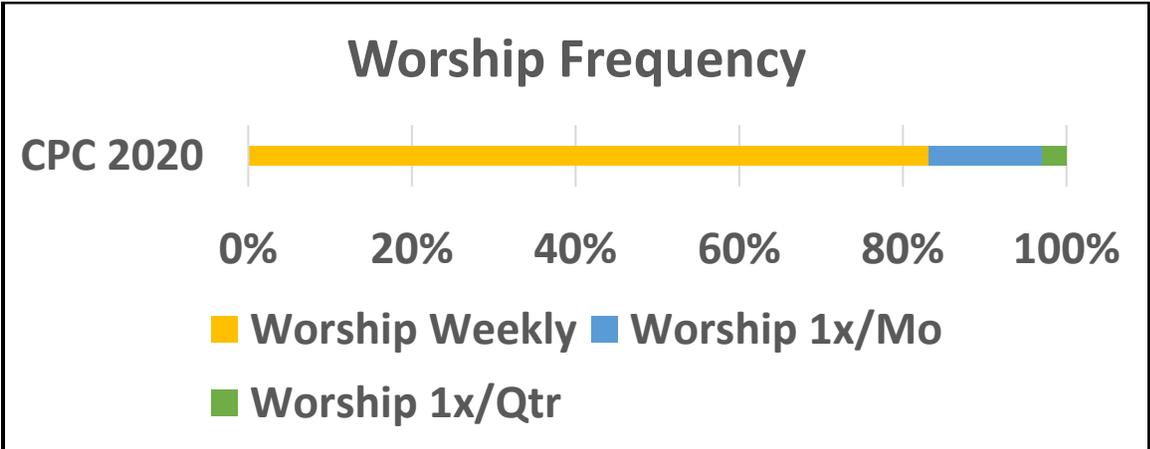
We know our Purpose: "Columbia Presbyterian Church (we) encourage all to encounter God, to enter into a life changing relationship with Jesus, and to allow the Holy Spirit to show you your place in God's work."

#### **We know what we value:**

We are a faith community that is *different* from our community at large. Compared to Clark County, our members identify as ***strongly involved with their faith.***

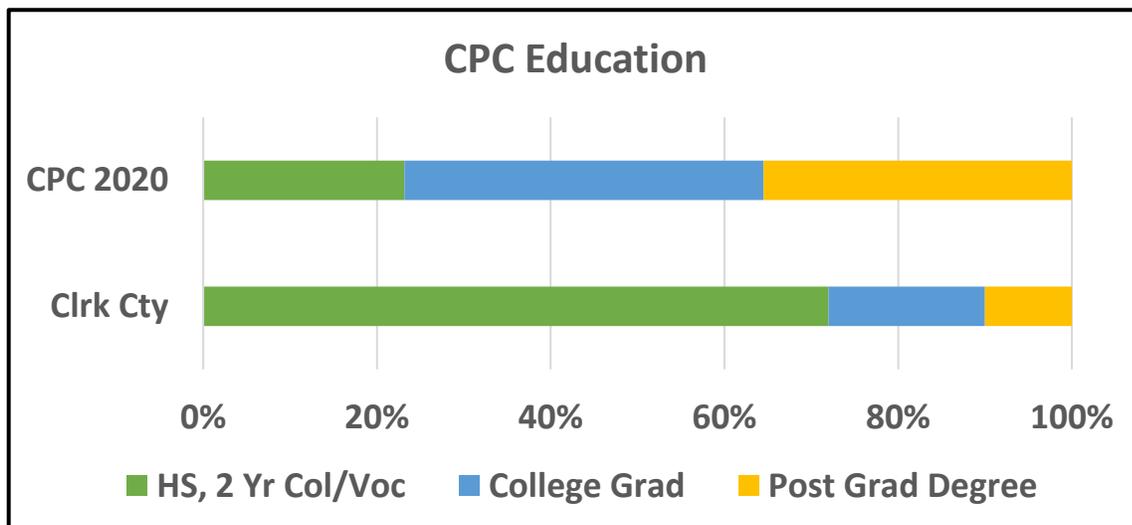


**Regular weekly worship is valued** in our community. Even though the local and national numbers show a decline in regular worship, we demonstrate a strong desire towards regular weekly attendance.





***We value education***



Our community knows that lifelong learning is one of the foundational pieces to faith and spiritual growth.

These strengths come with tensions. The love of learning/studying challenging material can be intimidating for those who do not feel "smart enough" to participate or enjoy what is happening in our faith community. Affirming those who do not feel called to in-depth study must be more than lip service. We as a community must continue to create space for all who want to participate. Acceptance of all at whatever level of learning is a critical piece we must continue to focus on or our strength will be our weakness.

There is a tension created from just being in community which is natural. It is essential to acknowledge that while not all are called to 'go out and serve', their voice is valued. We must continue to affirm everyone who answers God's call to serve, and be attentive to all their roles and responsibilities in the various seasons of life: growing families, careers, care for aging family members, illness, etc.

These are some major themes our faith community reflected upon during our focus group discussions:

- ***Faith Development and Spiritual Growth***
- ***Being in Community***
- ***Serving our neighbors***



**Faith Development and Spiritual Growth**

“Scripture based preaching and teaching of the highest quality.:

“CPC is a thinking community, but we are clearly thinkers with heart, compassion, and faith, who want to put our faith and knowledge to work for God's kingdom in the world.”

“CPC has INSIGHTFUL preaching and teaching. One is given things (through Sunday sermons) to think about. You are either given something NEW to think about, or you are given a NEW WAY to think about it.”

“CPC has programs for different levels of spirituality. Alpha through learner’s exchange. Discipleship Training and subsequent Huddle Groups have enriched many lives and increased sense of belonging and community.”

“Spiritual growth encompasses so many things, but worship is the most important. Appreciates the consistency of people over time, quality of the leadership, relationships that we nurture each week.”

“:...centrality of worship and how to apply scripture to daily living. Involved with prayer team gets me out of my comfort zone. Advent series with Jennifer Neal...art and music. Other workshops...Lenten series with Chuck Ferguson.”

“Spiritual growth through youth programs have informed grown children’s lives and directed them to look for ways to serve others in their work, career, communities”

We’ve been able to walk the dicey waters with the denomination issues because we have a clear, consistent mission, that we are really living.

“..church is introspective. Regularly questioning strengths and weaknesses. Ongoing, not just when looking for a pastor.”

“Columbia offers Biblical teaching while maintaining respect for people's intellect. I appreciate that we are encouraged to drink deeply at the well and think and pray for understanding and direction in our own lives.”



### **Being in Community—all generations**

"I really appreciate the emphasis now on intergenerational ministry. It's an important balance after years of heavy stand-alone youth ministry focus"

"Youth programs instill value that FAMILY is important and create many opportunities to include family into youth group activities, mission trips and acts of service."

"Our church has intergenerational FAMILY CONNECTIONS"

"There is a sense of community, or 'extended family' within members of CPC.  
It feels like a 'home-away-from-home'."

"..Providing smaller communities within CPC has probably the most important way the church has contributed to my life."

"CPC has a passion for outreach to the community as well as within the church;"

"Movie Night/Huddles/Vancouver Compassion/WHO Homeless Shelter/MAC Middle School/Marshall Elementary"

### **Serving our neighbors**

"CPC is all about service: It is who we are. In our neighborhood, community, country and out in the world."

"Foreign missions' involvement is corporal, not just sending money, but personal involvement CPC is involved in Clark County also, with MAC, the food bank.... The Missional Engagement Team; people gather around others who need support; in a huddle group; made aware of "parish" needs outside the CPC; youth involvement emphasizes discipleship. "



CPC encourages all staff and parishioners to follow their passions to serve Christ through service. CPC helps those with passions to grow their vision for what God is calling them to do and create 'experiments' to learn more about the process.

Aren't afraid to try to new things even if not successful. Utmost, Forge, Work camp evolving. Support for new things.

"CPC's relationship with Senegal is such a picture of the way Columbia is -- not once and done, but a long-term relationship of love and friendship and support.

Our church in ABOUT service; my home has become a neighborhood gathering place"

"CPC as a whole serve within our church, within the greater Vancouver area and across the country and world, all the way to Senegal."

"CPC encourages members to go out in service locally and to the world at large"

"Partnering with other churches on Compassion Vancouver."

Sometimes it feels we are so focused on outward missions that we neglect our inward focus (within congregation)

"k2 – Kids are attending who aren't regular Sunday attenders, and they often go on up to middle school and then high school youth group."

During this season on life (young children and babies at home) this person feels his #1 ability to 'serve' CPC and others in Christ is through his financial support of the church.

*(From: CPC Mission Study Focus Group Report March- April 2020)*



**We are called to serve our community:**

CPC Faith Community serves our neighbors next door and our neighbors around the globe. Circle of Friends Preschool, K-2 Wednesday Night Experiences, VBS, bible studies, along with the more formal and traditional programs, we open our doors to our community and serve on a structured and regular basis. Prayerfully and entrepreneurially CPC Community embraces the missional experiments mindset:

“Pastoral Staff are open and encourage ‘lay leadership’ to help with many ministry areas. They do not feel threatened by that and in fact encourage and equip others to help with ministry roles that are important within CPC.”

“CPC helps those with passions to grow their vision for what God is calling them to do and create ‘experiments’ to learn more about the process.”

‘One blessing in our church is that we allow you to try new things (Holy Yoga, medical ministry that Kathy Lasater has started). The pastor’s welcome ideas and support you to try new things’

*(From: CPC Mission Study Focus Group Report March- April 2020)*

CPC Faith Community fosters Missional Experiments, reflecting our highly valued Mission emphasis:

*Senegal— Spreading the gospel humanely in Senegal. Building lasting trust with the Senegalese. Relationships are the foundation to all the work done.*

*Compassion Vancouver— A Compassion Clinic is community service event led by local churches. It is designed to show the love of God to neighbors who are underinsured and in need.*

*Clark County Food bank—To alleviate hunger and its root causes. To inspire and grow a network of community health.*



*Melanesia Boat Project: Maritime Services, Humanitarian Aid, Search & Rescue, Assist Bible Translators, Medical Aid, Scripture Recording, Amputee Assistance, Spreading the Gospel wherever we go*

*Missional Experiments: Holy Yoga, Melanesia Boat Project, Faith Community Health Initiative*

*Circle of Friends Preschool – Age appropriate, Nurturing and Learning in a Christian Environment.*

*Hattie Foundation of Hope—Haiti Foundation of Hope is a Christian organization addressing the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the people in the impoverished and underserved rural communities of northern Haiti.*

*High School Work Camp: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade spend a week together serving a community and sharing scripture, prayer and fellowship*

The Columbia Future Forge: The Columbia Future Forge is a mentoring and training program whose goal is to teach young adults from diverse backgrounds professional job skills, life skills and to explore their unique talents and abilities.

*MAC Middle School Community Partners—We partner with MAC Middle School as the need arises: Lunch Buddies, Reading Buddies, Back Pack program to name a few*

*WHO-- The WHO is a winter overflow shelter providing additional capacity for folks in our community who are currently experiencing homelessness and need to get in from the outside on any given night during the coldest months, from November 1 to March 31*

The growth into this missional experiment mindset is an important transformation we as a faith community embrace and see as our way forward. We are a church community with doors wide open and ready to share the rhythms and life of our faith community with others. We nurture and encourage all to go out and share and serve

in the greater community. We see CPC as a place for all to gather and serve as God calls us.



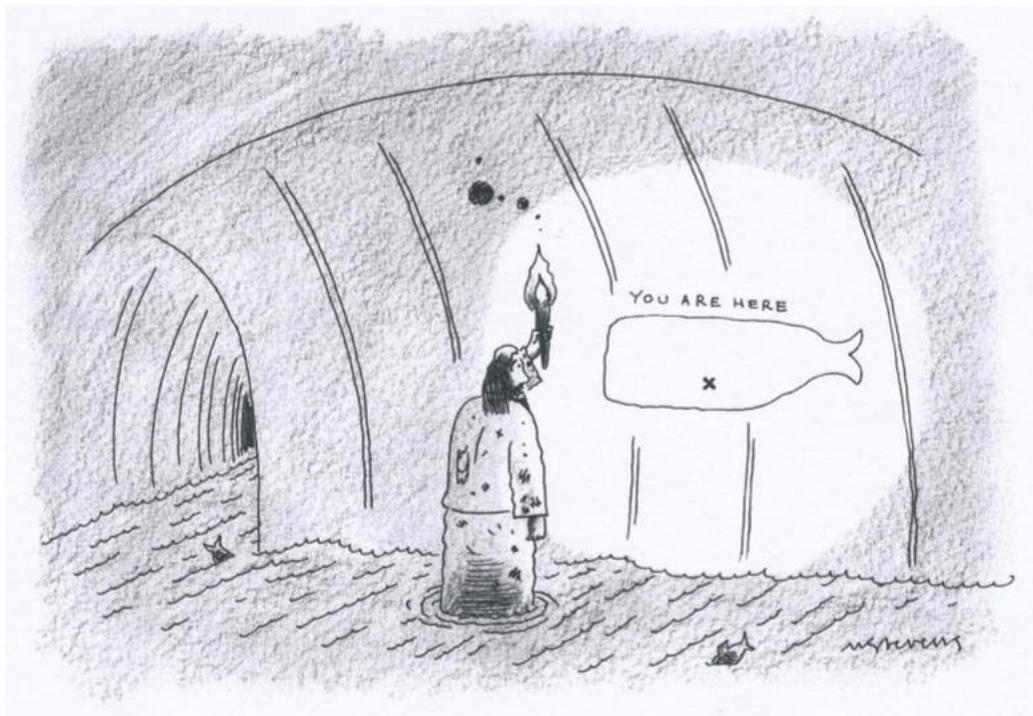
The CPC Faith Community in this season of blessing and transformation knows the walls of the building are just a part of who we are. We are out in the community, we are in community and we go to where our global community needs us.



**Conclusion:**

CPC is a faith community that is different. We recognize the future is uncertain. However, in this study we used methods that *are* certain and affirm our understanding of who we are, and how we are preparing for our future.

We recognize we may need to be more experimental and innovative in our programs and outreach in order to create and sustain the vital future we seek. At the same time, we remain focused on the cross as we continue to study the word, pray, give thanks in all things and seek to understand how “all generations together, making disciples, can go out called by God to serve”.





**Appendix:**

**Bulletin Insert for Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup>, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, March 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Questions for Focus Group Sessions**

- 1) **What are the most important ways our church has contributed to your life?**
- 2) **Concerning our life together-- the ministries and activities that nurture us-- How has CPC supported your spiritual growth?**
- 3) **What are the important, central characteristics or ways of life that make our church special?**
- 4) **How have you served your neighbors/ the world? How have we as CPC, served our neighbors/the world?**

**Guidelines to prepare for the Focus Group Session**

Sign up for a designated Focus Group time in the gathering area.

Pray and reflect on these questions.

- journal or jot notes if you want to organize your thoughts
- list programs you want to highlight

Remember: we are celebrating and collecting stories- not problem solving. You can identify concerns, just remember The Mission Study Team is focused on collecting stories (part 2) to help Columbia Presbyterian Church in this time of transition.

We seek stories to help us report:

- Who we are
- Our vision
- What we value
- And how God is calling us to serve