

Building a Vision for our Future



A Report of the Vision Task Force

Catonsville
Presbyterian
Church

March 2010

Purpose

The Vision Task Force was established by the Session and commissioned by the Congregation on Palm Sunday (2009) to “engage the congregation in a period of study, conversation and reflection in order to discern God’s vision for Catonsville Presbyterian Church in 2010-2015.” The following report provides a brief history and description of our congregation, highlights from the year of study, the insights gained and recommendations for the Session.

The goal of the task force was to provide a new vision statement for the congregation along with recommendations to the Session that give energy and focus for the work of the congregation in the years ahead. The task force adopted an “asset-based” approach to the planning, using the *Holy Conversations: Strategic planning as a spiritual practice for congregations* by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann (The Alban Institute, 2003) as its guide. The Vision Statement is intended to be a beginning of this new phase in the life of Catonsville Presbyterian Church as we commit to living out this vision together.

A Brief History

Catonsville Presbyterian Church was founded in 1880 by a group of Presbyterians from the city of Baltimore who wanted to provide a more convenient meeting place for Presbyterians living in the suburb of Catonsville. The original meetings and services were held in the Paradise Hotel in that section of Catonsville.

The first church building erected by the congregation was at the corner of Frederick Road and St. Timothy’s lane, and was dedicated as Paradise Presbyterian Church in January, 1881. It was renamed Catonsville Presbyterian Church in 1886, following the practice at the time of naming a church after its community.

As the congregation grew, the need for a larger building became apparent, and a parcel of land at the present site at Frederick Road and Beechwood Avenue was purchased. A building comprising the present Fellowship Hall wing and steeple tower was completed and dedicated in January, 1922. The lumber for the structure was donated by the Baer brothers, members of the congregation. The sanctuary wing of the building was completed and dedicated in April, 1928.

The ordination of women as elders was first confirmed in 1930 for the denomination, then called the Presbyterian Church in the USA, and CPC member Mrs. Walter Knipp became the first woman ordained as an elder within the Presbytery of Baltimore in 1931. During the 1940s and 1950s as the population of Catonsville increased, the church membership grew along with it, leading to the addition of the Church school classrooms. In 1963 an education wing was added, and a new manse constructed on the adjacent lot on Beechwood Avenue. In 1966 the membership peaked at 1282 members. Racial integration came to CPC in 1968 with the welcoming of Col. And Mrs. James Pennington into membership. Col. Pennington and his family are still active members to this day. As with most mainline congregations, the number of members has since declined, although it has stabilized at approximately 500 members in recent years.

In 1975 it was discovered that the steeple tower structure had become infested with carpenter ants and would have to be removed for safety. Wishing to restore the appearance of the building as quickly as possible, the congregation raised funds for the construction of a visually identical replacement steeple made of metal, and it was installed in November, 1976. It was during this same time that the congregation sponsored a Vietnamese refugee family, providing volunteers and financial resources to support their integration. This required raising funds and providing guidance for housing, employment, shopping, medical care, and schooling for their children. Ultimately, the Mai family became self-sufficient, and their children are now all college graduates. Several church members continue in contact with the family 35 years later.

Over the decades since its original construction, the church building has experienced the usual declines of age. At the same time, it became more and more apparent that access to the building by people with physical limitations was severely limited. In 2002, a "Renovation and New Use" committee (Re-NU) was organized to investigate these concerns, with a recommendation to improve the hospitality of our building with handicapped access, to air-condition the building, and to make numerous other upgrades and renovations. A capital fund-raising campaign was begun in 2006 leading to a capital construction project in 2008-2009, including the addition of new HC-accessible restrooms, an access ramp to the tower entrance, air-conditioning of the fellowship hall wing, refurbishment of the France Room and library, and many smaller projects. As part of the campaign, 10% of the funds were tithed to mission projects locally and around the world. (A second capital campaign is planned for 2011-2014 to raise funds to pay down the mortgage balance and, if possible, to undertake renovation projects deferred from the original campaign.)

While the recent renovations to the building are the most outwardly visible changes to the church, the congregation itself has also experienced change. It was also in 2002 that the church called an associate pastor to lead Christian Education and has since explored ways to provide meaningful educational and worship experiences for the growing number of children. The past decade has been a time of generational shift and leadership transition as younger members assume more formal leadership roles within the boards and committees of the church. When reflecting on what has been important to our recent past, members are quick to lift up the many ways in which we have responded to human need – the hospital in the Congo, school supplies for homeless children, youth mission trips, among others.

Adaptive Challenges to be the church in the 21st Century

A 2008 small group study on *Transforming Congregational Culture* by Anthony B. Robinson reminded us that as we begin to set a course for our future, we must acknowledge the external context in which we are called to be the church. Robinson summarizes this Postmodern Era:

1. No one church can claim special privilege to speak or be heard by the culture at large
2. Church has no lock on charity
3. World is now multi-centered – schools, malls, computers, bookstores
4. Society is fragmented, world of rapid shifts (MTV style)
5. Lots of competing alternatives on Sundays
6. No longer a single Truth to believe, we live in a time of multi-truths

Among the key recommendations of the study group was a request that Session consider two questions: "What most honors God, putting God before ourselves?" and "What is our purpose?" These two questions were at the center of the Task Force's process to discern a vision for our future.

Current Ministry

The heart of any congregation's life is its worship. In the interest of avoiding a fragmented congregation, CPC still worships at a single service on Sunday mornings, and a contemplative evening service in the style of Taize is offered approximately monthly. CPC has a tradition of strong, intellectual, and inspiring preaching, and music also figures prominently in the services, with adult and children's choirs, a handbell choir, and strong accompaniment to congregational hymn singing on the organ and/or piano. Worship each Sunday is followed by a fellowship hour at which light refreshments are served, and visitors are greeted as members socialize.

Christian education of all members is encouraged, with church school classes for ages three to adult, and child care is provided during both the education hour (9:00 a.m.) and the worship hour (10:30 a.m.), so that no members need to miss worship if they teach church school or work in child care.

Three youth groups for children in grades 3-5 (Lord's Little People), 6-8 (Rising Stars), and 9-12 (Crossroads) meet several evenings a month, and a major summer mission trip for youth and adult leaders is planned every 2-3 years. Retreats and other youth trips occur at various times during the year. A confirmation class for youth in grades 9 and 10 is provided every other year, for study of theology, church polity and government and the transition of youth into full church membership.

Bible study classes are held weekly, usually covering one book of the Bible at a time in depth, and lasting 10-14 weeks.

CPC employs three boards to carry out the organization and ministry of the church:

Session: Consisting of 15 ordained elder members, provides the direction and leadership of the church. Major functions are divided into committees which are staffed by elders and congregation members-at-large. Current standing committees include:

- Christian Education
- Finance
- Mission
- Outreach
- Nominating
- Peace and Justice
- Stewardship
- Worship

Other committees and task forces are established as needed for specific tasks.

Deacons: Consisting of 15 ordained deacon members, provides a caring ministry for those in special need within the congregation and the community. Ministry activities include visiting shut-ins and the ill and bereaved, providing emergency food and/or transportation for those with those needs, intercessory prayer as requested by congregation members, and praying through the congregation on a regular basis.

Trustees: Consisting of 12 members, the trustees are responsible for maintaining the physical facilities of the church, including the church building, manse, and grounds. They are also the legal representatives of the church in civil matters.

Fellowship groups provide an opportunity for members to engage in social activities and service projects with other members. Presbyterian Women provides fellowship, outreach, and mission opportunities to the women of the church in small group and at-large settings. Gallimaufry is an adult fellowship group open to all members, providing opportunities for socializing and enrichment through field trips, group dinners, mission endeavors, etc. "Gone Fishing" is a men's fellowship group that is just getting started. A group of quilters meets in the church weekly for conversation and work on various quilting and needlework projects.

The Arts Ministry has organized and held displays of various art forms, using the church library. These have employed paintings, crafts, photography and other art media by church members and artists in the community.

CPC in the Community

CPC has a history of strong involvement in and support of the greater Catonsville community, and this is reflected in the missions and organizations sponsored or supported by the church:

Child Care Center: The Catonsville Presbyterian Family Child Care Center is a fully-accredited, self-supporting child care center operated as a ministry to the community by CPC. It provides a Christian-oriented learning environment for 227 children from pre-school through grade 5.

Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts: CPC has sponsored scouting troops from the very beginning of their existence in Maryland. CPC's scout troops have a heavy emphasis on camping and on service activities.

Suburban Pastoral Counseling Center: CPC provides office and conference space for the center, which provides fee-based counseling to the community. Rent CPC receives from the center is used to provide aid to those who cannot afford its services.

Catonsville Presbyterian Concert Series: In its eleventh season, the series presents six professional musical concerts per year in the church sanctuary, free of charge to the community. It is a self-supporting program, relying on grants from local government and contributions from its audiences for its financial support.

Strawberry Festival: CPC presents this festival to the community every year on the first Saturday in June, and it has grown to be regarded as the unofficial opening of summer in Catonsville. Food, crafts, music and children's games and activities make this a treat for the whole family.

In addition to church-sponsored organizations, other non-profit organizations use the church facilities for their meetings and activities:

Al-Anon
BAN Network
Martial arts, Tai Chi, Kung-Fu
Scottish dancers

In November 2009 a "neighborhood walk" was organized in which members of the congregation delivered invitations to worship at CPC using door hangers throughout the adjoining neighborhoods. Nine teams of 2 to 3 individuals delivered 750 door hangers. Reflections on the experience reinforced the value of reaching out to others and the shared experience of small groups, reminding us of Jesus' wisdom in sending his disciples out by two.

CPC Statistics (December 31, 2009)

Membership:	482
Annual Budget:	\$475,235
Pledged Income:	\$348,822
Pledging units:	121
Christian Ed enrollment:	139

CPC membership is approximately twice the size of the average PCUSA congregation in the United States reflecting a national downward trend of the past several decades among main line churches. At the same time the average giving of CPC members has been on the rise, even in a time of economic uncertainty. Based on the number of active participants, it is estimated that the actual membership may be smaller than reported. In 2009, the Session established a Membership Task Force to review the church rolls and reach out to inactive members.

CPC's Assets and Values

Throughout the year the task force helped lead a number of events, including a series of "Holy Conversations," during which members of the congregation shared what they perceived as the assets of this church. Out of these a picture emerged as to the strengths and values that pervade our congregation. This is a church that is very much ALIVE, a church that acknowledges its gifts in thankfulness and is ready to respond to God's calling, a church whose core values include:

- **Initiative:** we are committed to helping god's people through many different forms of mission in our community and in the world. We are eager to find new ways to serve our brothers and sisters by carrying out mission together, and by using our building and grounds to enhance our visibility and connection to our neighbors in the Catonsville community.
- **Learning:** in sharing our knowledge with other members and the community alike; and by asking difficult questions in an open-minded environment.
- **Caring:** All of our members, regardless of age, show a strong desire to be givers of their time and talents: to homebound individuals, to the community at large, as well as to our mission partners. We have a proud history of supporting the growth of children and youth

through their involvement in education and service. We seek new ways to express our care and compassion for each other and our world.

- **Outreach:** Making use of the new space improvements and accessibility, providing new opportunities to invite people into the church for programs and interaction.
- **Fellowship (koinonia):** Coming together in new ways to learn from each other. There is a strong desire for greater opportunities to build bonds of community with each other as a congregation through social and educational events and mission service.
- **Worship at the Center:** Sunday worship service is a foundational experience that gives meaning to the rest of the values – coming together to bring our joys and our grief, to share our faith, give praise to God, to be renewed and to regularly reflect on the meaning of scripture as a living word for our lives individually and as a congregation in this time.

Future Directions Explored by the Congregation

During the Holy Conversations, members were asked to consider possible actions for the congregation that would best use the assets and energy of the congregation. Participants were then asked to vote for the activities in which they would personally be interested in participating. The main action ideas fell into three basic categories:

- 1) Opportunities for members of the congregation to get to know each other better and develop internal bonds of fellowship. Specific ideas were: Karaoke or Variety Shows, Intergenerational social activities, Over-70 Luncheon, and greater outreach to young families and the youth, to have fun together and engage members socially and in mission activities.
- 2) Hosting educational opportunities for the congregation and community at large to explore issues, ask searching questions and deepen our understanding of our world and our faith. This included programs such as community conversations, a lecture series, sharing history of CPC and the community.
- 3) Making use of our building and grounds and our members' particular professional skills and interests to serve our community. Many of these ideas were inspired by an interest in sharing our newly renovated space and accessibility -- to host informal gatherings such as a coffee house, host a community health fair, develop after school programs for middle school aged children and develop a community garden with our unfinished lot.

Task Force Recommendations for Session:

- 1. The Vision TF requests the endorsement/adoption of the proposed Vision Statement to guide the life and work of the congregation in the years ahead.**
- 2. The Vision TF asks that Session agree to review the ability of the current board and committee structure to facilitate the carrying out of the Vision Statement, including particular attention to the coordination of mission and fellowship activities.**
- 3. The Vision TF asks the Session to establish a process to review the highly rated activities identified by the Task Force for potential inclusion in future church programs.**
- 4. The Vision TF asks that Session report back to the congregation on a semiannual basis as to the progress toward implementing the vision and TF recommendations.**

This report and its recommendations are submitted on behalf of the Vision Task Force members: Eric Gunderson, David Hutton, Hollie Einolf, Josephine Titanji, Glenda Johnson, Torbjorn Nilsen, Bill Henderson and Susan Krehbiel, convener.

VISION STATEMENT FOR CATONSVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Adopted by the Session on March 3, 2010

We seek to find and share God's calling for this community of faith through worship, fellowship, and service.

We are called to live in conformity with Christ because the Church does not belong to us, but belongs to God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, God's people at Catonsville Presbyterian Church will strive to:

- Offer inspiring worship through compelling and relevant preaching, enriching music and thoughtful prayer.
- Worship and gather as a welcoming and accepting community of faith in a space open and accessible to all.
- Provide opportunities that nurture the spirit and promote learning for the members and visitors of this Church.
- Foster fellowship that strengthens relationships and bonds of friendship, and promotes opportunities to share God's love.
- Share the gifts of this congregation in service with our brothers and sisters through mission programs, locally and globally.
- Nurture the growth and development of children and youth, and encourage and support their active participation in the life of the Church.
- Maintain our strong commitment to the inclusion of music as an integral part of our life together.
- Support intergenerational activities of fellowship and mission.

Appendix A

Vision Task Force Report Annual Congregational Meeting January 31, 2010

Task Force Members are: Eric Gunderson, David Hutton, Hollie Einolf, Josephine Titanji, Glenda Johnson, Torbjorn Nilsen, Bill Henderson and Susan Krehbiel, convener.

The Vision Task Force was established by the Session and commissioned by the congregation on Palm Sunday to "engage the congregation in a period of study, conversation and reflection in order to discern God's vision for Catonsville Presbyterian Church in 2010-2015." On **Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010 we look forward to the commissioning of a new Vision Statement for our church.**

We approached the visioning process from theological, historical and practical perspectives. And we set out to guide the congregation in a process that acknowledges the current context in which we seek to be the church, God's call for us to love each other and be God's expression of love for the world, to create an open and dynamic process with the congregation and create a vision for our future that builds on our strengths and lessons learned from our past. We want to create a vision that is responsive to deep systemic shifts of our society and culture and consider the different generational cultures within in our church and society.

Over the summer we reviewed previous congregational studies and strategic planning activities which took place over the past forty years. We asked ourselves what these earlier statements said about our story as a congregation and where we are today. We looked at our church statistically.

On October 18, 2009: The Task Force led the worship service, sharing a dialogue sermon and inviting people to identify one (or more) assets of our congregation.

Throughout November, small group discussions, known as Holy Conversations spent time identifying the assets or gifts of our congregation and activities or actions we could do that bring these gifts together. **Approximately 80 members participated**, including 8 middle and high school youth. Each Holy Conversation went through 4 stages of activities:

1. Recognizing our Assets –physical, financial, personal, collective;
2. Connecting the Dots – finding our affinities
3. Voting with our Feet – matching interests and assets to find the energy
4. Reflecting on What Happened

And we participated in the Neighborhood Walk led by the Outreach Committee to experience the sharing of the hand of welcome and to observe the community around us more closely.

On the morning of January 31st, the Adult Education class will have developed a CPC history, sharing their memories and reflections on how our past shapes us for the future.

And here is what we have learned and witnessed:

With 491 members in 2008, our congregation is larger than the average church in the PC(USA) of 250 members. The congregation is in a relatively healthy and stable place. There is a healthy level of stress and a generational shift is taking place in leadership and make up of congregation. We can build on the goal of hospitality identified in the Capital Campaign.

The neighborhoods around CPC have a wide range of economic, racial and social diversity –college students, young families of all sizes, retirees. People who live in rented rooms, duplexes, small single family homes and large old estates.

As a congregation, we are called to live in conformity to Christ. We need to remember that the church does not belong to us, but belongs to God.

Education—we are a learning congregation, interested in asking difficult questions. We are an educated congregation interested in sharing classes & topics of interest with our members and the wider community.

Focus on children and older people both as recipients (programs and services) & as active donors of service. We have a proud history of supporting the growth of children and youth with active youth groups, the Scout troop and Child Care Center. The youth and older members can be givers of their time and talents -- to homebound individuals or to mission partners.

Community outreach – the new space improvements and accessibility provide new opportunities to invite people into the church for programs.

Caring – we are known internally as a caring community and want this to be known locally & globally as a more caring congregation than is often perceived by people outside the congregation and who do not know Presbyterians personally.

Active and Compassionate – We are committed to many different types of mission to our community and the world. We are anxious to find new ways to do mission together.

Great location and spacious grounds: Several groups recognized our location near Baltimore/Washington and the opportunities this presents to raise awareness of social justice issues within the larger community. We can use our building and grounds to enhance our visibility and connection to the Catonsville community.

Intergenerational Community – We can come together in new ways to learn from each other. There is a yearning for greater opportunities to build bonds of community with each other as a congregation through social and educational events and mission service.

Join us on Friday, March 12, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. for a potluck supper to hear a final report of the Vision TF and to share and discuss the new vision statement!

Appendix B

CPC Assets (from Asset Mapping exercise in "Holy Conversations")

Physical Facilities/location:

- Proximity to Charlestown, other assisted living centers (senior members)
- Proximity to Patapsco Valley State Park
- Proximity to two colleges (UMBC, CCBC-Catonsville)
- Proximity to Hillcrest Elementary School
- Proximity to Baltimore City
- Proximity to Annapolis (Legislature, state agencies)
- Proximity to Washington, DC (Congress, gov't agencies)
- Child Care Center
- Child Care Center playground
- Spacious grounds
- Adequate convenient parking
- Air-conditioned fellowship hall wing
- Gymnasium
- Well-equipped kitchen
- Location – visibility
- New tower room
- Attractive exterior, architecturally significant
- Beautiful sanctuary
- Sanctuary acoustics (music events)
- Renovated fellowship hall
- Accessible and welcoming building
- Variety of rooms and spaces within building
- Renovated youth rooms
- Renovated library/media room
- Renovated France Room
- Steeple attractive to cell phone providers-income

Ministry/Program:

- Outstanding pastoral staff
- Strong music staff
- Congregation values program for children and youth
- Congregation values community among members
- Welcoming congregation
- Many active families with children and youth
- Wide mix of ages
- Congregation values community involvement
- Financially sound
- Congregation values mission involvement- step up to support causes
- Hands-on mission projects; Cold Weather Shelter, Habitat for Humanity, youth mission trips
- Individual mission projects; Congo hospital, Santi School
- Homebound visitation-Deacons and others
- Chancel choir
- Handbell choir

Childrens' choir
Church school program, dedicated teachers
Three Youth groups
Sunday childcare providers
Strong adult education program
Retirees dedicated to working around the church
Strong Scouting heritage
Presbyterian Women
Strong Presbyterian loyalty, sense of connectedness
Core group of people who get things done
Bible study program
Gallimaufry adult fellowship group
Well-educated congregation
Strong social justice program
Strawberry Festival
Inspiring, stimulating worship
Excellent preaching from both pastors
Strong office support staff
Arts ministry, exhibitions
Covenant Network membership

Miscellaneous/Other:

130 years of history
Favorable demographics in community
Good musicians in congregation
Excess grounds offer potential revenue source
Some members have grown up in this church
Diversity of members from other religious traditions
History of strong support/involvement with Presbytery
Knowledgeable members as resource persons (teachers, engineers, bankers, cooks, techies, lawyers, etc.)
Politically moderate/liberal
Tolerance for diverse views, open-mindedness

Appendix C

Top Action Ideas from Holy Conversations

Socializing/Karaoke/Variety Shows (7/18 votes)

Physical fitness and exercises
Commitment to excellence in music program
Helping to get people together and acquainted
Many members with musical talent
Doug and Greg (music leaders)
Singing and love of music
The new K-5 children's choir
Children's choir

Open Invitation (6/18 votes)

Covenant Network church
A willingness to ask difficult questions
Caring congregation
Open-mindedness
Where is God? When we care for one another
A willingness to admit we don't have all the answers

CPC History Series (6/18 votes)

Retired persons with time to devote to church
Adult Education programs
Bible study
History/Past: How it's mentioned, artifacts, etc. displayed
Long-standing presence in the community
Love of learning
"Remember when..."
The Adult Ed program

Community Conversations + Lecture Series (4 +2/18 votes)

Flexibility/Growth/Experimenting with change (eg: Taize service)
Eternal student
Bright minds
Good education
Attractive building in highly visible location
Openness to outside groups using the building
Academic congregation
Our location on Frederick Road
AV equipment in library

Health Fair (10/28 votes)

Lots of room/rooms, plenty of space
Blood drive
Creative problem solving
Space
Flu clinic
Podiatrist
Proximity to the city – but not in the city
Central location in Catonsville
Nurses
Child care center
Location in Catonsville
Handicapped accessible
Proximity to Hillcrest Elem.
Pharmacists

Community Garden (10/28 votes)

Beautiful building
Large "green" property
Frederick Rd visibility
Prominent location within Catonsville
Church grounds
Expansive grounds

Youth Coffee House (10/28 votes)

[This is in addition to the votes on the youth pages.]
Fellowship Hall
Youth groups
Commercial kitchen potential
Musical gifts
Inspiring worship
Provide meeting place for community groups
Groups using the facility

Intergenerational social activities (15 votes)

Gallimaufry
Value: social interaction
Christian education classes (adult & youth)
Travel groups

Intergenerational event; e.g., potluck (13 votes)

Organizational ability
Building
Strong sense of community among members
Young families with children
Fellowship
Diverse congregation

Internal outreach to young families-mission/social (11 votes)

Young families with children
Presbyterian Women
Youth choir
Proximity to institutions of higher education
Bible study
Playground
Boy Scouts
Youth/teen energy
Balt Co. Public School system
Youth groups
Friendly congregation
UMBC

Over-70 Luncheon, plus other people (10 votes)

Multi-purpose meeting rooms with decent furniture
Air-conditioning (fellowship hall & meeting rooms)

From the youth:

Singing (asset 1) *with* Ken (asset 2) – 14/28 votes

Youth Coffee House (6/28 votes)

Music
Matt Boulton's friends (in bands)

Photos from Holy Conversations 2009



