



Re-Visioning

The Session of Westminster formed a task force in September 2022 to “Re-Vision” Westminster for the years to come. The pandemic that began in March 2020 forced sanctuaries to empty and kept fellowship at a distance. The pandemic sharpened the divisions of politics, race, and sexual identity. By 2023, Westminster was challenged and bewildered, and the congregation was suffering. It was also clear that all of our leadership staff would be approaching retirement in 2-5 years.

What follows is a report on the process and the prayerful vision for our immediate years ahead.



Conversations

With a quest to discover what might be some “God-Sized Dreams” for Westminster, the Visioning Task Force hosted a number of congregation-wide and focused gatherings.

We Wondered

What would it look like to be...

- proactive instead of reactive - imaginative and not fearful?
- a community in an age of individualism - transformative vs. divisive?
- real in an age of artificial intelligence?
- “ministers of reconciliation” in an echo chamber world?
- welcoming to the unchurched?
- understanding of the fears of others?

We Asked

Where do I experience deep gladness?

What do I see as the world’s deep hunger?

What do I need Westminster to be in my life?

What does God want Westminster to be?

We Dreamed

Westminster as a welcoming place for all.

Westminster to be a safe place. A learning, questioning, mission-driven, diverse community that appeals to people of all ages.

Westminster to be a beacon of hope and outreach, a faithful witness in times of division.

Westminster to be known as open-minded and seeking justice, care, and love for everyone.

Westminster to hear God’s call to be a light to our city, nation, and world.

Challenges We Face

There is a fear related to sacrifice. Jesus calls us to “take up the cross and follow him.” How can we be people who sacrifice our “gods” for the love of God and neighbor?

In an increasingly divided nation, how do we reconcile our money, politics, and idols to the radical call of Jesus?

How will we dare to speak to a world of injustice while we desperately desire our own peace?

Artificial Intelligence is here. While we do not know the ramifications of AI on the world, we know that the Good News is very real. How might we be the real and saving Body of Christ in an artificial world?

The Church, denomination, and culture are changing rapidly. Westminster needs to be attentive and more nimble to address the challenges ahead.

Our denomination is suffering a loss of membership and leadership.

Insurance, housing, inflation, security needs, and plant repairs will continue to impact our ministry and mission budget.

Where once the Church occupied “sacred hours,” the Church must now compete for commitments.

We are seeing a rise of the “nones,” that is, people who may be spiritual but distrust religion. How do we speak to that mistrust?

How do we minister to those who have few options for care and hope?



Our "GOD-sized Dreams"

Westminster Loves All

"We love because God first loved us." 1 John 4:19

Westminster Shines God's Light

"For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." II Corinthians 4:6

Westminster Bravely Promotes Reconciliation

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...." II Corinthians 5:17-18

Westminster Transforms and Renews our Community and World

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2

Our Covenant

As we look to Westminster's future, we are truly hopeful for "God-Sized Dreams" to become realities. In these efforts, we seek to let our light shine before others (Matthew 5:16), to become ministers of reconciliation loving all compassionately (because God loved us first), and to transform and renew our community and world. As unique individuals, as a collective congregation and recognizing we are all children of God, we seek to:

- grow in the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus and in our own personal and communal experiences
- love one another, being slow to judge and quick to pardon
- embody God's unifying grace and forgiveness in all our relationships, in all aspects of our lives
- be open-minded to the diversity of opinions in our congregation and the world, and to consider our opinions in light of the command to love God and our neighbor, and
- promote the Kingdom of God on earth, knowing that nothing can separate us from God's love.

We enter into this covenant freely, promising to abide by its claim on our lives.



Turning Dreams into Reality

Sea Change to “See” Change

Jesus called his disciples away from the sea and to follow him so they could see for themselves the power of God and the Good News of the Gospel. The floodwaters of 2010 helped us to see for ourselves how **“Living Out God’s Word”**

Transforms us into “building up the Body of Christ”

Reconciles our needs with the need of our neighbors

Makes us see God’s **light**

Turns hope into the reality of God’s **love**.

Some use statistics to prove that the Church is on the decline; however, we believe that there’s never been a more important time to be the Body of Christ. We believe we must be laser focused on God’s Word and living it out. We must move from any attempt to preserve an institution, and move towards the call of God.

First Steps:

- Our congregation needs to be able to articulate our vision covenant.
- Our congregation, Session, staff, and other leadership need to be led by our God-sized vision and not by pesky distractions.
- There will be an ongoing visionary body that will seek to see with the eyes of Christ in approaching the demands of the future.
- History has shown that the more we dare to “Live Out God’s Word” the more we understand the treasure we have in the extraordinary power of God.
- There needs to be a renewed emphasis on eye-to-eye and hand-to-hand invitations to join in ministry.

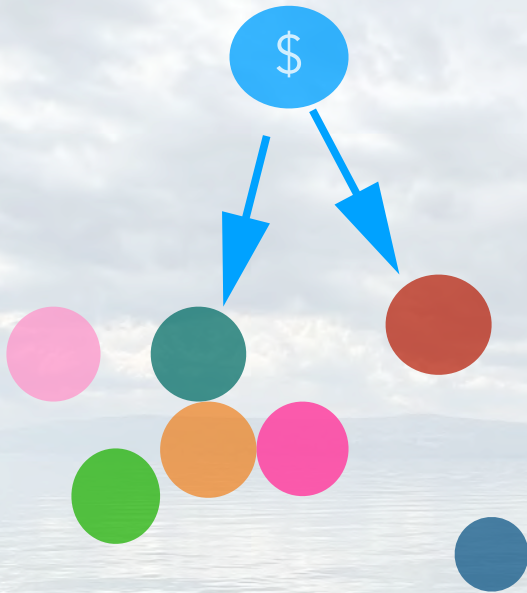
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Turning Dreams into Reality

Sea Change to “See” Change

- We believe our congregation suffers from siloed ministries. Money can often dictate ministry and “squeaky wheels” can upset priorities. We believe that our missions and ministries demand a new collaborative ministry model.

Old Ministry Model



New Ministry Model



When we overlay our vision onto our missions and ministries we know that new ways of Living Out God’s Word will appear.

For example, during budget season it is easy to embrace scarcity over abundance. There is little guidance on how winners and losers are chosen. We believe we need to get out of the boat we’re in and be more cognizant of how a little in God’s hands will feed the multitudes with leftovers to spare. Our vision calls us to embrace a vision of God’s abundance. Budget seasons will respond to where God is calling us. The Hands on Ministry Committee recently wondered what would happen if we took Lent from a season of “giving up” to a season of hearing God’s call to one new mission or ministry? We see this as a wonderful example of how God is calling us out of the boat and into seeing God at work in the world.

We call on all members, committees, and ministries to seize our God-Sized Dreams in everything we do. What will happen when we begin to overlap our vision in our lives and in every ministry Westminster has? Stay tuned - God is at work in our midst!

Discernment Task Force 2024

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