

Invitation to Engage

Guiding Statement (PCUSA Vision 2020)

(30 – 45 minutes)

Introduction

What is Vision 2020?

- ❖ The Assembly Committee on the Way Forward recommended to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) that the Co-Moderators name a “2020 Vision Team” of fifteen people **to develop a guiding statement for the denomination and make a plan for its implementation with all deliberate speed**. The process of developing such a guiding statement will help us to name and claim our denominational identity as we seek to follow the Spirit into the future.

- ❖ **Some of the questions used in listening sessions and questions offered:**
 - Who are we? What makes us unique as _____ [Presbyterians]?
(your church/organization/ministry)
 - What breaks God’s heart in your community?
 - Where do you encounter God’s joy, love and grace in your community?
 - How is _____ [the Presbyterian Church (USA)] relevant?
(your church/organization/ministry)
 - What do we, _____ [PCUSA] need to let go of?
 - What do we, _____ [PCUSA] need to hold on to?
(your church/organization/ministry)

Opening

Engaging the Word¹

- ❖ Habakkuk: 1:1 – 2 :3 (With specific attention to: 2: 2 & 3)

- ❖ Matthew 25: 31 – 46
 - First read the passage (out loud) and just listen.
 - Second reading (out loud)², grab pencil or pen. As you listen to the passage again:
 - Listen again for God’s action or voice.

¹ Other texts to engage: 1 Sam. 3, Proverbs 19:21, Matt. 26: 1-13. If using w/ group, divide into groups & assign each a text.

² If more than one person in the room, invite another voice to read the second time through.

- Look for or a Word or phrase that pops-out. Make note by underlining or drawing.
- Write down questions and ways these texts inform your understanding of vision.
- How do these texts inform who God is calling you/us to be?

❖ Prayer of thanksgiving.

Engaging the draft Guiding Statement

- ❖ With a copy of the *draft* Guiding Statement in front of you, think-back to the Engaging the Word opening exercise.
- ❖ Using the same process, read³ the statement through once (silently).
- ❖ Read the statement a second time (outload).
- ❖ Pause, between each section and take time to write, doodle, and underline, etc., within that section.⁴
 - Look for a Word or phrase that pops out.
 - Listen for God’s action or voice?
 - How does this vision invite _____ to participate in God’s grace-filled community⁵?

Closing Prayer

- ❖ We **pray** the Holy Spirit continues moving in life-affirming and healing ways.
- ❖ We pray we have the **courage** to speak, to engage, to hear, and to follow.
- ❖ We pray that we can be **united** in our diversity that we can find our commonality in our core – the risen Christ⁶, who alone redeems the world!
- ❖ We pray that we will **serve** boldly and in a way, that heals the wounds of the world and ushers in “Thy Kingdom/Kindom⁷ Come.”
- ❖ We pray that we would be **alive** with vivaciousness and a strength that is birthed only through knowing that death will never have the final say, that death becomes a necessary new birth for all who follow Christ.

We pray that God, who alone breathes life, and makes hearts soft would speak with clarity through the Holy Spirit to each who are gathered and to the fullness of the church not present (today)

³ If more than one person in the room, invite different voices to read each section.

⁴ Digging Deeper:

- What biblical narrative(s) come up in your mind as you listen to the guiding statement?
- Where or How does the Guiding Statement confront or convict?

⁵ Digging Deeper: A Matthew 25 Church - pcusa.org/matthew25

⁶ <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/hope-lord-jesus-christ/>

⁷ <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2018/2/12/bible-study-ga223-will-explore-kin-dom-versus-king/>

allowing these simple (and simply challenging) words to become the guiding statement of what it means for us to be faithful people of God, faithful followers of Christ, and faithful to the voice of the Holy Spirit who dwells within, allowing us to indeed live into the fullness of what it means to be part of the Presbyterian Church (USA): **Prayerful, Courageous, United, Serving, Alive!**⁸

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

- T.S. ELIOT, "LITTLE GIDDING"

A word about the 2020 Vision Team's Process

- ❖ Using scripture passages as opening exercises, the 2020 Vision team held listening sessions with presbyteries, congregations, synod leaders, groups at the Big Tent, Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators, Seminaries, and with Campus Ministries over a period of fourteen months.
- ❖ After listening sessions across the country, they met for three face-to-face gatherings to assimilate information, pray and listen for God's guidance and direction.
- ❖ The team was acutely aware of the time constraints and the deadline of producing information for the 2018 General Assembly. We recognized that our challenge was similar in many ways to what congregations, presbyteries, synods, GA committees, school boards, non-profit leaders, and a variety of other groups face.
- ❖ The words from Habakkuk, "wait for it," provided an adaptive centering, while the team confessed the temptation to default to quick "fix-it" it answers. As they wrestled, they paused to listen.
- ❖ Read and listen to the words from Ecclesiastes 3: 1-4 and Psalm 130: 5-6.⁹
- ❖ Reflect on a selection from Kathleen Norris's devotion on Time.¹⁰

Gradually my[our] perspective on time changed.

*In our culture, time can seem like an enemy:
it chews us up and spits us out with appalling ease.
But the monastic perspective welcome time as a gift from God,
and seeks to put it to good use
rather than allowing us to be used up by it...
Liturgical time is essentially poetic time,
oriented toward process rather than productivity,
willing to wait attentively
in stillness, rather than always pushing
to "get the job done."*

- ❖ The team left their last face-to-face, knowing they faithfully listened to the Holy Spirit's guidance, captured the essence of what they heard, and sent their draft Guiding Statement to GA 2018.

As you reflect, respond and are informed by the Guiding Statement, we invite you to **TRY** it (In your ministry setting) **TWEAK** it (experiment), and let us hear from you!
Engage with #PCUSA2020 to share your Story.

⁸ Vision 2020 Team Report to the 2018 General Assembly PCUSA.

⁹ Additional suggested passages: Genesis 32: 22-32.

¹⁰ God's Time, Not Our Time: Kathleen Norris, 40 Day Journey (Our understanding of time).

Engaging the Word

Habakkuk 1 – 2: 3

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

The Prophet's Complaint

² O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?

Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?

³ Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?

Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.

⁴ So the law becomes slack
and justice never prevails.

The wicked surround the righteous—
therefore judgment comes forth perverted.

⁵ Look at the nations, and see!
Be astonished! Be astounded!

For a work is being done in your days
that you would not believe if you were told.

¹² Are you not from of old,
O Lord my God, my Holy One?
You^[b] shall not die.

**I will stand at my watchpost,
and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will say to
me,
and what he^[a] will answer concerning my
complaint.**

² Then the Lord answered me and said:

**Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.**

³ **For there is still a vision for the appointed
time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.**

Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When

did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Reflect, Respond, and Request (pray)

Engaging the Guiding Statement

(PCUSA Vision 2020)

Our Reformed heritage understands the power of words and we humbly offer this guiding statement as speaking truth and declaring life.

The 2020 Vision Team was mandated by the 222nd General Assembly (2016) and charged with developing a guiding statement for the denomination as it moves into the future.

In the faithful desire to discern the will of God we listened throughout the denomination and beyond, hearing hope and frustration, expectation and anxiety. Along our journey even when it is hard to see the way forward, God has spoken and continues to speak to us in these times and places.

Therefore, God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be:

Prayerful

- Confessing our sin to God and those we have wronged, we accept our responsibility for the brokenness in the world and in ourselves. In Christ we are assured of forgiveness and freed to forgive others.
- We ask the Holy Spirit to direct and guide us as we actively listen to Scripture and fully engage in the joys and challenges of life in this present world.
- By grace Christ binds us together, cleanses us in the waters of baptism, nourishes us at the Lord's table, and sends us out to share the Good News.

Courageous

- Reformed and always being reformed, we follow the Holy Spirit in new and imaginative ways to places we have not yet been.
- We foster the hope of reconciliation in Christ who transforms the world through healing individuals and communities.
- We work for God's justice and peace for all people in every land, walking with the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the abused.

United

- As members of the Church universal, we are Christ's disciples, called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Against forces that seek to divide, Christ compels us to bear witness to a love that connects communities across great differences.
- We approach others in a spirit of openness and trust as we follow Jesus Christ in respecting the freedom of other religions, worldviews, and traditions.

Serving

- Gratefully following the One who washed his disciples' feet, we listen to our neighbors, working to meet their practical needs.
- We partner with others to become the hands and feet of God in the world, showing compassion and generosity to all creation.
- The Holy Spirit pushes us beyond the familiar, meeting people where they are as we share Christ's transformative love.

Alive

- We are people of the resurrection: though death surrounds us, we are not afraid because we follow the One who was raised from the tomb.
- The Holy Spirit gives us courage to build a community that reflects the fullness of God's image in humanity: beautifully diverse in age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexuality, physical and mental ability, geography, and theological conviction.
- In the sure and certain hope of resurrection, we joyfully testify that the Church and its members are called to follow Christ's model by risking all, even life itself, for the sake of the Gospel.

And so, God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be: **Prayerful, Courageous, United, Serving, Alive.**

Thanks be to God.