

RUTGERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

MISSION REVIEW

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MISSION STATEMENT

“As followers of Jesus Christ, we rejoice in God’s plan for a just, loving, and peaceful world, and we commit ourselves to making it a reality for ALL people everywhere.” The Rutgers Mission Statement, adopted by the Session and ratified by the Congregation, is printed in the church bulletin each Sunday and appears on our website. All through the year, Rutgers Presbyterian Church celebrates God’s radically inclusive, affirming, unconditional love.

MORE LIGHT STATEMENT

Rutgers Church is a member of the More Light Church Network, an organization of inclusive Presbyterian churches that welcome individuals into full membership, including ordained offices, without regard to sexual orientation.

Because we believe that ALL human beings are created in God’s image and are members of the Body of Christ, and because we wish to legitimize who we are, and to be explicit in what is already our common and historical practice, we wish Rutgers Presbyterian Church to be known as a “More Light Church” as a way of underscoring our welcome and inclusion of lesbian and gay people into the fold of God. We do not claim to have “more light” than other churches, but as we seek to do God’s will and be God’s people, we also actively seek more light on the inclusive nature of God’s grace in Jesus Christ; more light on the relationship of spirituality and sexuality; more light from the experience of lesbian and gay Christians; and more light in ministry with ALL people in ALL forms of loving expressions.

We recognize that the policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) excludes only lesbian and gay people from positions of leadership. We find this to be contradictory with the essence of Christian principles and with our *Book of Order*, which guarantees full participation with its rights and privileges to all members. We recoil at a policy that encourages deception on the part of lesbians and gays as to their sexual orientation and by the demand of abstinence from the sexual expression of their love. As a reformed church, always being reformed by the Spirit of God, we call upon the General Assembly to reverse its position and urge our Presbytery to use all means available to work toward increasing openness, understanding, and growth in this direction. We believe that the moral requirements for membership should consist of a life-style of commitment to the principles of love and justice embodied in the teachings and example of Jesus. Therefore, trusting in God’s grace and working on behalf of justice, the Session of Rutgers Presbyterian Church welcomes and embraces ALL persons who seek to live faithfully into full membership and participation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including the opportunity and the responsibility to serve in ordained leadership positions.

We rejoice in the presence of ALL whom God has gathered by the movement of the Spirit, regardless of age, alternative status, education, ethnic heritage, gender, national origin, race, or sexual orientation without their having to hide, deny, or apologize for their circumstance. We pray that this act of conscience will be used as “a means to faithfulness as God breaks forth yet more light from God’s Word.”

Introduction

Rutgers is a warm, welcoming, and concerned “family.” Its activities are about equally divided among worship, membership nurture, and outreach to the community. We believe the integrated Christian life is one where spiritual growth and social commitment continually inform and reinforce one another and are inseparable. We practice evangelism in the true sense of the word: we spread God’s love and good news through our welcome, worship, and community outreach. We seek a pastor who offers inspirational sermons based on strong biblical scholarship while also relating the gospel to social concerns and community issues.

Under the guidance of the Mission Review Steering Committee, this review results from three separate methods of gathering information from Rutgers members and friends to determine who we are, what we do, and where we would like to go in the future. The first involved informal Sunday afternoon gatherings at the church open to all members and friends of Rutgers, during which participants met in small groups to discuss the Six Great Ends of the Presbyterian Church as derived from the *Book of Order*: (1) the proclamation of God’s good news, (2) the nurture of God’s people, (3) providing for meaningful worship, (4) honoring truth, (5) promoting social justice, and (6) demonstrating God-oriented life in community. The second involved meeting for meals and conversation over the summer and early fall. At these intimate gatherings, held either in members’ homes or at the church, Rutgers members and friends answered the following two questions: (1) why do you come to Rutgers Church? and (2) as you see it, what are the two or three most important things that Rutgers needs to think about and do during the next ten years? These were a great success, with over 50 participants (see Appendix D for meal notes). These events culminated with an eighty-four question Mission Review Survey. We collected 95 completed surveys, and the anonymously submitted data were compiled by an outside evaluator and analyzed by the Mission Review Steering Committee (see Appendix A).

These information-gathering events have allowed us to write this in-depth profile of our congregation. It is from these researches, and a great deal of prayer and meditation, that the following report is submitted. In the pages that follow, we describe who we are and what we are doing as a congregation. We also explore what God calls us to do in the next phase of our ministry. We describe the needs of our community and the ways that God calls us to meet those needs. We name specific ways that we will strengthen our congregational and community ministry in the years ahead.

What Is the History of Rutgers Church?

There has been a Rutgers Congregation in Manhattan since 1798. We celebrated our Bicentennial in 1998. Over the past two centuries, the congregation has built five sanctuaries. The latest (and present) one, dating from 1925, includes two commercial buildings (renovated in 1991), the income from which supports over 70% of the Church Operating Budget (see Appendix C). To date we have installed twenty-one ministers, eight of whom have served as Moderator of the General Assembly. This is the fifth Mission Review Rutgers has undertaken in the last generation. A partial review was conducted in 2004 when we established the position of Designated Associate Pastor, which the Reverend

Cheryl Pynch now holds. This current review results from the retirement in 2006 of the Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer. Under the leadership of the Reverend David D. Prince as Interim Pastor since September 25, 2006, the congregation is exploring new ways to spread the good news of God's love in New York's Upper West Side and beyond.

What Is the Rutgers Congregation?

At present we have 118 active members and five affiliate members, a total that is slightly down from our 2004 total of 130. This decrease results from a number of factors, including: relocation, changes in the church's direction, and the Session's April 2006 decision to move a number of members to Rutgers' inactive list, which now totals 38. In 2007, Rutgers welcomed seven new members and three affiliate members. In addition, we have a sizable group who are neither members nor affiliates but who attend regularly, and we always have visitors. Attendance at regular Sunday morning service averages about 100 and holidays and other special events see even higher numbers of both members and visitors. Length of membership ranges from three months to fifty-nine years with 71% as members for five years or more. About evenly split between homeowners and renters, most members and friends live within walking or easy commuting distance of the church and have lived in the community for many years. While most are not planning to move any time soon, 13% did indicate that they are likely to move within the next three years, and an almost equal number were unable to predict whether they would or not.

The following demographic information is derived from our Mission Review Survey, which had 95 respondents, 62 of whom are members. These results show the Rutgers community to be heterogeneous with respect to age, gender, race, and sexual orientation – a measure of the welcoming and non-judgmental spirit of the church. Ninety percent of worshippers are baptized, while one-third was raised Presbyterian. The median and average age of members is 54, with the range in age spanning from 22 to 98 years. Age distribution breaks down fairly evenly, with approximately one-fifth of the congregation in each of the following four brackets: 33-42, 43-52, 53-62, and 63-72. Only two members are under 32, but we usually have twice as many visitors in that age group. The number of children is growing due in large part to the nurture and guidance of the Designated Associate Pastor. The enrolled participants in the Church School and in the nursery program continue to expand, numbering 26 and 5, respectively. We currently have three students participating in confirmation classes.

There are slightly more women than men in the Rutgers Congregation (defined herein as members and visitors). Half are married or live with a domestic partner. Twenty-eight percent are single, 12% are divorced or separated, and 6% listed their living status as "other." A large percentage of respondents (75%) do not have children living in their households. Of those who do, the age distribution is from the very young through the teen years and early twenties. Rutgers is predominantly Caucasian (76%) with 10% African-American, and 6% Hispanic/Latino, Asian, or multi-racial. Fifty-nine percent identify themselves as heterosexual, 28% as homosexual, and 1% as bisexual.

In terms of employment and education, 62% are employed full or part time, and 26% are retired, full-time homemakers, or unemployed. These statistics match the 2000 census for the surrounding community (see Appendix B). Thirteen percent of respondents reported having been unemployed within the last year. We have some students and disabled persons as well. The large majority of those employed are in professional or executive positions, and a sizable group is in the fine and performing arts. Remaining careers are divided among those in the service industry, administrative support, sales, and technical support. The Rutgers community is well educated and financially stable. Ninety-three percent of respondents hold high school degrees or higher (as compared to 85% for the community at large). Of this group, 82% have graduated from college, and 48% hold graduate degrees. Eighty-six percent of all respondents have some internet access, with 79% able to access it at home, and 59% consider themselves to be highly computer literate. Given the demographics of our community, it is not surprising that 39% of respondents report incomes higher than \$75,000 with an additional twenty-four percent reporting incomes of \$50,000-74,999.

What Does the Rutgers Congregation Believe?

In the area of theological beliefs, our survey shows the congregation to be open and liberal. A large majority believe that God is “a constant presence” at work in the world and in our everyday lives. Forty-four percent assert that the Bible is “the record of many different persons’ response to God” and must thus be interpreted individually for “basic moral and religious teachings.” A larger group (53%) affirms that the Bible is “the inspired Word of God” that should be read and interpreted “within the proper historical and linguistic contexts to understand their true meaning.” A very small minority (3%) believes the Bible is the actual Word of God and should be taken literally. Most congregants believe that salvation is not limited to those who profess a belief in Jesus Christ or ask for his forgiveness but rather is available to all. Similarly, most do not believe that the purpose of this life is to prepare for the next. Only 15% of respondents believe that converting persons to Christ must be the first step in creating a better society while the majority (64%) agrees “the primary purpose of the church is to promote peace and social justice.”

The Rutgers congregation puts worship at the center of its life together. People testified to this during the Mission Review meal sharing times and in the survey, which indicates that the majority believes:

- That traditions are meaningful and should be maintained but can be combined with some newer forms of worship; however, 17% of all respondents want traditions to remain unchanged
- That worship should regularly challenge the congregation to relate the scriptures to the realities we face in today’s world

Additionally, the majority prefers:

- A mixture of old and new hymns and anthems
- Inclusive (non-sexist) language whenever possible, but that some of the older liturgy and translations of scripture are beautiful and meaningful and should be retained

In the area of social and political beliefs, the outcomes are again decidedly “liberal.” An overwhelming majority either “agrees” or “strongly agrees” with the following statements:

- In a country based on religious freedom such as ours, it is appropriate for Christians to share their beliefs and moral values with others.
- It is inappropriate for the United States to impose its political and economic beliefs on other nations.
- The decision to go to war in Iraq was a mistake.
- It is appropriate for the United States to intervene militarily in circumstances of genocide and other humanitarian crises.
- Although American minorities may have achieved legal equality, I believe affirmative action should be used to help them achieve economic equality.
- Schools should provide sex education, including explicit discussions of birth control and methods of preventing HIV transmission.
- The law should allow doctors to perform an abortion for any woman who wants one.
- The sexual behavior of homosexuals living in a committed relationship is not sinful.
- It is acceptable for a person to have sexual relations before a civil/religious ceremony of commitment.
- Sexual orientation is predetermined.
- Women are as competent as men to assume leadership in the church.
- The pastor’s gender is unimportant.

Both the meals and the survey results show Rutgers to be a positive and emotionally healthy congregation that feels spiritually nurtured and cared for by its clergy and one another. An overwhelming majority either “agrees” or “strongly agrees” with the following statements:

- There is acceptance and appreciation of differing opinions and beliefs among members of this congregation.
- In times of personal need, I feel emotionally and spiritually supported by this congregation.
- My spiritual needs are met at Rutgers.
- There is ample opportunity for members to make their concerns and hopes for the congregation known to church leaders.
 - Thirty-one percent of members, however, believe that a small but powerful group of members is actually running the church, something to be mindful of going forward.
- Persons who serve on our church committees and boards represent a good cross-section of the membership.
- Rutgers should continue to welcome individuals into full membership, including ordained offices, without regard to sexual orientation.
- Strangers are made to feel welcome here.
- The leadership of this congregation has my confidence and support.
- Members and friends who are hospitalized or homebound are taken care of.

- Members are well informed about the activities taking place in the congregation.

What Are Rutgers' Resources in Physical Plant, Finances, and Personnel?

The Rutgers Church property consists of the sanctuary and Church House at 236 West 73rd Street, the Rutgers Building on the corner of 73rd Street and Broadway (a five-story office building integrated with the church house), the Wood Dolson building next door on Broadway (a three-story commercial building), and a two-bedroom manse at 96th Street and Broadway. The approximate value of the complex is \$18 million dollars. The sanctuary was completely renovated and re-decorated in the late 1960s, but by 1988, the Church House and office building were in need of extensive attention. Accordingly, the Session and Trustees set about securing a mortgage of \$1.5 million dollars (retired in 1997) to renovate and redesign the structure and their operating systems. This work was carried out over the next three years, resulting in a structure now thoroughly up-to-date, usable, and beautiful, with five floors of assembly rooms, Sunday school rooms, offices, and a gymnasium. The Church House is open seven days a week and is usually filled with activities. One estimate is that about 1,000 people pass through its doors each week. The reconstruction also made both the Church House and sanctuary handicapped accessible. Ongoing maintenance continues. For instance, in 2008 the church will repair or replace the windows in the church buildings.

The rehabilitated commercial space has made possible rental income at prevailing market rates, and the building continues to be fully occupied. Two offices are leased to Presbyterian Senior Services rent-free, with Rutgers Church receiving benevolence credit. The constant use of both the commercial buildings and the Church House has required increases in maintenance and security personnel; these figures are reflected in the respective budgets (see Appendix C). The Real Estate Budget is administered by the Board of Trustees, whose Investment Subcommittee also oversees the Permanent Fund Investments. Moreover, rental income provides the majority of the Church Operating Budget, with revenue from programs and services accounting for 10%, and member contributions accounting for another 3%. The Church Operating Budget is approved and administered by the Session.

As provided in the *Book of Order* (G6.03 & G10) the Session members are elected annually to three-year terms and have cognizance over the governance of the Church in all its aspects. Trustees and Deacons are also elected to three-year terms. All are lay volunteers. Other elected church officers and paid staff include:

Clerk of Session: Jeremiah Rosario
 Treasurer: Warwick Busfield
 Interim Pastor: The Reverend David D. Prince
 Designated Associate Pastor: The Reverend Cheryl Pynch
 Parish Consultant: The Reverend Charles A. Amstein
 Executive Director of Properties: Bruce O. Bergquist
 Head Sexton: Dermonte Alleyne
 Choral Director/Organist: George Davey

What Is the Community in Which Rutgers Functions?

Rutgers' neighborhood is a part of Manhattan's Upper West Side, which is bounded by 57th Street, the Hudson River, West 110th Street, and Central Park. This equates to Community Board 7 and zip codes 10023, 10024, and 10025. It is interesting to note that the demographic profile of Rutgers Church reflects that of the community in almost all respects. A close comparison however, reveals that the Rutgers population tends to be older, to have fewer children, and to be better educated than the community at large. (For 2000 census data, see Appendix B.)

There are 39 houses of worship in Rutgers' community, including 18 protestant churches (of which six are Presbyterian), 12 synagogues, 4 Catholic churches, and 5 others that provide religious services as well as after school programs, senior activities, a variety of food programs, community services, and homeless shelters through Partnership for the Homeless. Since 1993, the neighborhood has gained two protestant churches while losing one synagogue, two Catholic churches, and two other houses of worship. Another newcomer to the area, Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA), is excluded from these totals since it leases space from other organizations. (At present, it offers three Sunday services on the Upper West Side – one 9:15 a.m. service at The Ethical Culture Society on West 64th Street and Central Park West and two evening services at First Baptist Church on West 79th Street and Broadway.)

The Upper West Side has numerous places of education, arts, and recreation. These include 27 public and 15 private schools for grades K-12, five public libraries, and many higher learning institutions including Fordham University, NY Institute of Technology, and the Julliard School. Our neighborhood is home to The Children's Museum of Manhattan, The American Folk Art Museum, The American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Biblical Art. There are 16 daycare centers, nursery schools, and Head Start programs. Two major public parks, Central and Riverside, bound the community at the East and West respectively, and there are innumerable health clubs.

Numerous institutions provide a wide-range of other services. Multi-service community organizations include: St. Matthew's & St. Timothy's Neighborhood Center, Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center, and Goddard Riverside Community Center. The Star Learning Center, sponsored by St. Matthew's & St. Timothy's, provides tutoring for academically at-risk children. The Jewish Guild for the Blind provides services for visually impaired, blind, and multi-disabled people. The Stephen Gaynor School and the West End Day School provide services for developmentally impaired children ages 5 through 14. Families receive services various institutions, including the Center for Family Treatment & Divorce Mediation, the Center for Psychology & Family Therapy, the Center for the Study of Family Abuse, and the Stepfamily Foundation. There are many youth service centers of which The Dome Project, Westside YMCA, Rheedin Foundation, and Goddard Residences are the most noteworthy. St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital provides support services for rape victims and substance abuse treatment. Phoenix House, Arms Acres, and Veritas provide substance abuse treatment center/residences. Goddard Riverside Project Outreach provides shelter and

services for the homeless, and there are 12 meal service programs (including Rutgers) and 3 clothing donation centers. Senior citizens have a multitude of services available. West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing (WSFSSH) operates eight residences. There are three adult centers, 6 senior centers, and 3 senior residences. The three nursing homes in the community include Amsterdam Nursing, Jewish Home & Hospital for the Aged, and Katari Residence.

The challenge to Rutgers is to identify community needs not currently being met, or those being inadequately met while also extending its purview to the city as a whole and to the world community.

Worship and Membership Nurture: Where We Are Now

Again, it is clear that worship is the center of our life at Rutgers, and the majority attends weekly. In the survey, corporate worship was ranked as the most important aspect of church participation. Sixty percent of respondents and a slightly higher percentage of members attend church services regularly during the summer. Those who do not are absent primarily because of travel and family commitments. During worship we seek to realize God's immanent presence through prayer and praise and seek to expand our spirituality through reflection and study. We are supported and sustained in our lives and in our ministry by this worship. Regular events include:

1. The **Sunday Morning Worship Service** led by a team of clergy and volunteer lay participants, using inclusive language in most cases. Music is directed by a paid organist who rehearses professional soloists and section leaders and a volunteer choir. The Worship Committee, appointed by the Session, along with the minister and organist, plan for seasonal observances (Easter, Christmas, Pentecost, etc.). In conjunction with the Board of Deacons and church staff, they also supervise volunteer lay participants and ushers. Services are taped and made available to the homebound and shut-ins.
2. **Communion** is regularly offered to all congregants, including children (usually on the second Sunday of each month), is prepared by the Deacons, and is served by the minister and ordained lay members. Survey respondents were split in their opinions about communion. Thirty-nine percent of members believe that communion is a sacrament and should be served with familiar, age-old rituals to preserve dignity, solemnity, and holiness. An equal number believe that there are many ways to serve communion and they would like to try as many as possible during worship. Currently, the liturgy follows an order of service in use for over fifteen years as devised by a special task force in the early 1990's.
3. A **Children's Sermon** is included in each Sunday's service, except on Communion Sundays.
4. A **Fellowship Hour** follows each Sunday morning service, with refreshments prepared and served by the Deacons.

5. Other offerings of spiritual nurture include:
 - a. **Adult Sunday School** that meets before worship service;
 - b. **Symposia, lectures, and workshops** on various topics;
 - c. **Vesper Services** during Advent and Lent;
 - d. **Children's Sunday School** meets weekly after the Children's Sermon; childcare for infants and toddlers is provided from 10:45 a.m. through the Worship Service;
 - e. **S.K.A.T.E.** (Sanctuary for Kids of Acceptance, Trust, and Education): a youth group for 5th to 8th graders, meets monthly for service activities, fun, and spiritual connection;
 - f. **Confirmation Classes** for young people to explore making an affirmation of faith and becoming full members of the church; and
 - g. **Vacation Bible School:** Rutgers' Vacation Bible School is for children ages 4 through 11. Offered towards the end of August for one week, we meet in the morning from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Every year we welcome children from the church, from the neighborhood, and even from other boroughs. We have a wonderful adult staff, including teachers, artists, and musicians, with older students as assistants.
6. A **Membership Committee**, appointed by the Session, conducts periodic membership classes that explore the faith journeys of membership applicants, the polity and practices of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the privileges and responsibilities of membership. The committee also hosts an annual Invite-a-Friend Sunday Luncheon.
7. A **Stewardship Committee**, appointed by the Session, conducts a stewardship campaign each autumn that seeks commitments from the congregants not only for money to support church programming but also of time and talents. The campaign emphasizes the Biblical basis of stewardship. In addition to annual pledges and weekly offerings, Rutgers participates in all four denominational special offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peacemaking, and Christmas Joy.
8. A **Special Events Committee**, appointed by the Session, organizes a series of activities throughout the church year, usually including Homecoming in September, an All Church Christmas Social during Advent, an Easter breakfast, and a Church Picnic. The committee also presents a variety of special performances throughout the year in music, poetry, and drama. In addition, the

Board of Deacons oversees a Christmas Eve reception and a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.

Communication is important at Rutgers. We use a variety of methods to inform people about the many facets of church life. A monthly newsletter, *Renewal*, is mailed to both members and friends. It includes articles by and/or about members, a message from the pastor, and news about upcoming congregational activities and developments in the world of religion. A weekly letter with information about the next Sunday service and other imminent events is sent via e-mail to members and friends. Those without e-mail receive this message, upon request, via regular mail. Members of the staff maintain the Rutgers website (www.rutgerschurch.com), which includes information about special events, the music program, and a sermon archive. Rutgers also maintains signboards on the exterior and interior of the church to convey up-to-date announcements and messages to the large numbers of people who either pass by or come into our church building each week.

Rutgers members say that they are committed to their community of faith because it spiritually nourishes them and offers many opportunities to serve others. Beyond Sunday worship, the majority of members spend an additional 30 minutes to 4 hours each week in church activities. Almost half of the respondents said that they were willing to spend, on average, almost two additional hours in church activities next year.

Regarding Stewardship, the majority believes that our financial resources are used wisely. Fifty-eight percent of members agree that stewardship has a profound spiritual influence on their lives — a significant increase from 2004 and 1993 (8% and 12% respectively). An even higher percentage (68%) agree that determining how much they give is important to their spiritual lives, and most recognize that even though Rutgers is a wealthy church, it still needs their pledges. Three quarters of members are satisfied with the level of support they give to the life and programs of Rutgers, understanding it to be equally important to give time and talent as well as financial contributions.

Worship and Membership Nurture: Looking to the Future

One of the most consistent findings in this study of the congregation is that Rutgers is a warm and welcoming community. People feel connected, needed, and part of the “family.” There is, however, a tension between wanting to keep the warm, comforting aspects of family and wanting to grow. People expressed different opinions here with some wanting to push for expansion and others wanting to protect the smallness of the congregation. This will be an area for discussion in the future.

In the area of worship and membership nurture, we will continue:

- To welcome individuals into full membership and ordained offices without regard to sexual orientation
- To welcome visitors and encourage them to return
- To accept and appreciate diversity of opinion and belief among members of the congregation

- To support and nourish members and visitors spiritually and emotionally by providing a warm and nurturing church environment
- To inspire the congregation's confidence in and support of its leadership, in part by welcoming and encouraging members to make their concerns and hopes for the congregation known and by keeping the membership well-informed of activities and concerns
- To provide a traditional style of worship that allows for and incorporates newer modes as well, putting full trust in the Worship Committee to make changes as they see fit
- To provide a strong music program that combines old and new hymns and anthems and relies on both professional and volunteer singers, including children
- To provide liturgy that uses inclusive language whenever possible but that retains some of the older translations, which are beautiful and meaningful
- To offer sermons that regularly challenge the congregation to relate scripture to today's realities
- To lead worship by a combination of both clergy and lay participants, including children on occasion
- To maintain our commitment to the belief that the primary purpose of the church is to promote peace and social justice
- To encourage stewardship through raised awareness of how money is spent and how stewardship impacts spirituality

In addition to maintaining these ongoing practices, we aim:

- To create patterns of church worship that provide a stronger sense of God's presence
- To give more attention to relating the gospel to social concerns and community problems
- To develop ways to talk more openly and comfortably about our faith
- To increase Rutgers' involvement in the neighborhood and broader community
- To design several additional forms of worship, including hymn-sing, wholeness and healing, jazz vespers, an evening or mid-week service, additional musical activities for children of all ages, and prayer meetings
- To provide more occasions for fellowship at Rutgers
- To recruit and train more teachers for the growing Sunday School
- To capitalize on the desire to participate and special abilities of individuals in the congregation, reaching out to membership by asking them to participate

Community Outreach and Evangelism: Where We Are Now

As our vision statement for the Rutgers Peace and Social Justice Network states, we aim to create "a Christian community which integrates an empowering and nurturing inward spiritual journey with an outward journey of action and witness that shares God's transforming love." To this end, we support a number of outreach programs locally, nationally, and internationally.

Church Sponsored Groups for the Larger Community:

1. **Thursday Nighters Meal Program:** Every Thursday evening from September through June, Rutgers opens its doors to people in the neighborhood for a hot, home-cooked meal, fellowship, and — on most nights — a movie. Volunteers are welcome to both cook and serve and the event is coordinated by our meal program coordinator in conjunction with the Deacons. On a typical Thursday night, a group of approximately 50 come together for dinner, socializing, and entertainment. Participants include senior citizens, the homeless, those with low or fixed incomes, and those desiring fellowship and community.
2. **Men's Homeless Shelter (in cooperation with Partnership for the Homeless):** Each Friday through Sunday, working with Christ & St. Stephen Episcopal Church, Rutgers hosts ten men in need of shelter who have been screened by the Partnership for the Homeless. Volunteers from Rutgers and the community stay overnight — in a safe and pleasant environment — so that the men have a nourishing meal and a comfortable place to sleep while working toward permanent housing. Supported by a dedicated special fund, and staffed by volunteers, our shelter is regularly cited as one of the best in the area.
3. **Broadway Community:** During Sunday worship, money and food are collected to support Broadway Community, Inc. — a program of Broadway Presbyterian Church that assists the poor, homeless, and recovering substance abusers.
4. **Thanksgiving Dinner:** Every November, members and friends of Rutgers work with the staff and residents of Euclid Hall — a residence for formerly homeless individuals — to prepare and serve Thanksgiving dinner. Euclid Hall is sponsored by the West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing.
5. **Body & Spirit:** The 'Body & Spirit' Program was established with the idea that a sound body enriches the inner and outer spirit. When we integrate our body and spirit, we open the door to all kinds of wonderment, knowledge, and joy. Toddler programs were successfully launched in September 2000. School age, adult, and older adult programs began in January 2001. Moderate fees are charged, but financial assistance is readily available. Body and Spirit is the umbrella for a number of educational programs including:
 - a. **Computer Classes for Adults:** Taught by a computer training specialist. Sessions on a variety of computer skills including: using the internet, e-mail, online shopping, basic computer skills, web page and html design, desktop publishing, digital photography, file management, blogging, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Photoshop, and others as needed.

- b. **Arts, Physical, and Feldenkreis Classes:** a variety of exercise and creative classes for adults. Varies each semester/summer.
 - c. **Toddler, Pre-K, and After School Programs:** a variety of arts, computer, movement, theater, music, and sports programs for children. Also coordinates birthday parties.
6. **Child's Play:** a unique play group program for parents and their pre-school children, where children can play and parents can meet to discuss parenting in a friendly, supportive environment. Founded in 1986, it is a moderately priced, fee-based program with scholarship funds available. (The Director of the Child's Play program also sponsors groups in other churches.) Recently, Child's Play has begun Mandarin Language playgroups. A Mothers' Spiritual Support/Bible Study group — collaboration between Child's Play and the Christian Education Committee — has been a gateway for several new families into the church.
 7. **Cub Scouts:** sponsored by the Session and meeting weekly. Cub Scouts meet on Monday and Tuesday nights, using both the 5th floor and the gymnasium.
 8. **Men's Support Group:** meets weekly on Tuesday nights, for people who are HIV+ or who are Persons Living With AIDS.
 9. **Presbyterian Senior Services:** an agency of the Presbytery of New York City founded in 1962, PSS has been part of the Rutgers family since 1965. PSS serves the elderly of all religions through two residences (with 300 apartments), three senior centers in the South Bronx, twenty-eight senior volunteer centers located in New York City's Presbyterian churches, and a Caregivers Support Program. Currently, the PSS/WSF Grandparent Family apartments house 50 families and 96 grandchildren. This residence is the first exclusively for grandparents raising their grandchildren in New York State.
 10. **Presbyterian Welcome:** a broad coalition of eighteen Presbyterian churches and numerous individuals, working together for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons within the churches of the Presbytery of New York City and our denomination, and staffed by a full-time Coordinator/Evangelist, a part-time Administrator, and a Seminary Intern. The program was initiated by the Rutgers and Jan Hus Presbyterian churches in 1997.

These last two groups are offered rent-free space in our Church House or Office Building as part of Rutgers Church's mission.

Groups Using Church House Space on a Regular, Fee-Paying Basis (all must be compatible with the Rutgers mission and be approved by the Session):

1. Several **12-Step Programs** which change as needs develop, currently hosting three Al-Anon and two AA weekly meetings;

2. **Christian Endeavor:** the New York State office for this non-denominational outreach to youth is located in our office building;
3. **The Welsh Church:** from September through June, the Welsh Church holds its monthly Service (in Welsh) in Rutgers' Sanctuary with a social hour afterwards in the Daniel Russell Room. The Welsh Women's Group meets one Saturday per month;
4. **Front Runners:** a weekly running club for LGBT persons; and
5. **Psychotherapy & Spirituality Institute:** professional psychotherapy and pastoral counseling for individuals and families.

Benevolence: Community, National, and International Outreach:

Benevolence covers a variety of forms of giving and receiving such as: the weekly collection for the Broadway Community food pantry, scholarships for college students, office space provided to Presbyterian Senior Services and Presbyterian Welcome, and direct giving by Rutgers members and friends to the four denominational special offerings.

Benevolence also covers corporate tithing. Rutgers has a long history of allocating a minimum of 10% of the total Church Operating Budget for benevolence. In 2002, the session boldly voted to increase its benevolence giving until they reached the goal of 31% in the year 2010. In 2007, benevolence reached 26% (\$506,427). However, after much discussion, thought, and prayer, the session recently voted to decrease giving to 20% in 2008 due to major emergency repairs needed on the church premises. The session in its wisdom believes that it is imperative to keep the church house in good repair so it can remain a solid basis for ministry in the community. Future session discussions will prayerfully consider appropriate benevolence percentages.

Previously, a Benevolence Treasurer, with Session approval, coordinated benevolence funds. Now, after a significant revision and expansion of the coordination and distribution of benevolence funds, a committee distributes funds and arranges for special presentations to the church by various agencies and is subdivided into subcommittees for Local, National, and International distribution.

The Peace and Social Justice Network and the Christian Education and Benevolence committees work together to engage the congregation in mission through advocacy, education, and giving. Some of our current emphases include the AIDS pandemic (to which Rutgers has committed 1.5% of its total budget), homelessness and low-income housing, neighborhood/NYC activism, and the struggle for the full inclusion of LGBT people in the church.

In addition to faithful support of the Presbyterian Mission Giving, World Service, and other PC (U.S.A.)-related causes, support has been supplied to numerous groups and causes including, but not limited to:

- AIDS Interfaith
- The Church of Gethsemane
- Goddard-Riverside Community Center
- Partnership for the Homeless
- Union Theological Seminary
- West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing (WSFSSH)
- Westside Campaign Against Hunger

Community Outreach and Evangelism: Looking to the Future

When asked to talk about what Rutgers should be doing in the next ten years, one member said, “We should live and communicate the good news. We should find opportunities for renewal, opportunities for hope, and opportunities for transformation of oneself and/or society.” To these ends, we have identified areas of outreach that we will continue and maintain and others that we hope to develop or increase.

Outreach that we will continue and maintain:

- close ties with WSFSSH
- spiritual support groups for people (including children) whose lives are affected by HIV and AIDS
- services for the seniors and homeless who come to Rutgers
- ties with Union Seminary, including an assured seminarian position

Outreach that we hope to develop or increase:

- involvement in the neighborhood and community
- ways to promote peace and social justice
- ways to share our beliefs and moral values with others
- programs for the elderly and persons living alone
- additional programs for children and youth
- outreach to members of minority groups
- additional programs for the homeless and hungry

What Is Rutgers Looking For in a New Pastor/Head-of-Staff?

Everyone agrees that the ability to give inspirational sermons is a crucial characteristic of a potential pastor with an overwhelming majority citing it as the most important criterion. Counseling church members in personal or spiritual development, strong biblical scholarship, effective problem solving and decision-making skills, and leadership in social justice issues are other highly desirable qualities being sought. Calling on sick, homebound, or distressed members and friends was also seen as important. Indeed, the congregation would like its new pastor to be a “presence” in fellowship, outreach, and mission activities. The survey

shows that either a man or a woman would be welcome in the position. There is no strong preference either way. The respondents are rather evenly divided as to whether they prefer a style of leadership that “empowers lay persons to lead” or one that “assumes the bulk of leadership responsibility.” Based on a deep understanding of the values of the congregation, we would also be looking for an individual with experience, background, understanding and to support the continuing development of adolescent, youth and family ministries.

Where Is Rutgers Headed?

Over fifteen years ago, Rutgers sponsored a highly successful fund-raising event for a now popular but then nascent food service called **God’s Love We Deliver**. That title could also be our motto for the future. The members of Rutgers have traditionally believed in the importance of preaching the Good News. Previous Mission Reviews in 1987, 1993, and 2004 have shown continued commitment that Rutgers’ most basic goal is to be a friendly, open, and loving community devoted to healing, reconciling, and uniting in worship the full spectrum of humanity.

It is beyond question that over time Rutgers has been a church in the reformed tradition, and that it continues to adapt, grow, and reform. The concept of “the Rutgers family” is a strong and broad one. Indeed, it is a diverse family — rich and poor, African American and Caucasian, young and old, gay and straight — all living together in Christ, bearing one another’s burdens, and welcoming each other. The challenge for the future is to continue to widen the family circle without losing our signature warmth and strength. We have suggested above certain aims for the future. In realizing these programs we need to remain intentional, well organized, prayerful, and trusting in the Holy Spirit and in each other. If we are to deliver God’s love to the world in a healing and reconciling manner we must be constantly aware that everything changes with the key exception of God’s consistent, radically inclusive, affirming, and unconditional love.

The congregation of Rutgers Presbyterian Church continually strives to be ever more socially, politically, and spiritually aware. Our first responses to the AIDS epidemic, for example, were decidedly personal, as individual members and friends succumbed to the disease. But gradually our focus grew to include broader issues, such as unequal access to healthcare around the world as well as our denomination’s continuing adherence to a policy of heterosexual privilege. We have looked around our immediate neighborhood on the West Side and seen over the past few years a tremendous influx of families with small children, whom we welcome in our growing Sunday school and other Youth Programs. We have looked around our city and seen that the problems of affordable housing and homelessness continue. We continue to enlarge our vision to encompass the world beyond our shores. We continue to explore just what it means to be a follower of Christ in the new millennium and believe more deeply than ever before that we are part of a larger world. We have an even stronger sense that our neighbor is not just someone from our immediate neighborhood but our fellow human beings around the globe. We are aware that God has blessed us with tremendous financial resources, are grateful for that bounty, and are mindful of Jesus’ command to share with our neighbors in need. Thus, we have agreed to set aside 20% of our

church operating budget for outside mission, separate from church programs and administration.

War, terrorism, and exclusion are tools of division and destruction. We, the members of Rutgers Church, hope instead to be part of God’s ongoing creation, thus following Jesus’ teaching to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” and to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Indeed, we agree, “There is no commandment greater than these.”

We have a broad vision for the future. We believe that calling a new Pastor will help us to realize our goals. Of course, we are mindful of the fact that all our efforts are fruitless without God’s blessing and guidance. Indeed, we must welcome change while maintaining the traditions we hold dear. To that end, we have tried our best to discern God’s will for our congregation and hope that the path we have chosen will lead us on the kind of journey our Lord Jesus desires for us — one of deeper spiritual nurture and more active social witness. Whatever happens, we remain followers of Christ who rejoice in God’s plan for a just, loving, and peaceful world; and we commit ourselves to making it a reality for all people.

Approvals:

Anne Leader, *Chair*
Mission Review Steering Committee

February 1, 2008
Date

Jeremiah Rosario, *Clerk of Session*

February 1, 2008
Date

The Reverend David D. Prince
Interim Pastor, Moderator

February 1, 2008
Date

Chair, Committee on Ministry

Date