



Second Presbyterian Church Mission Study Report

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Introduction

Second Presbyterian Church presents its mission study report, prepared by its mission study team and based on congregation-wide surveys, meetings, and discussions. This interim period has allowed the church to reflect on the gifts and spirit of this community, the challenges today of being Church, especially a small church, and most importantly, where God is calling us to be, made all the more clear as we experience the effects of a global pandemic.

During this period of transition, Second Church finds itself at a crossroads. Due to a property agreement, it has completed long-deferred building upgrades. At the same time, it is assessing the prospects of its aging church building, which is not ADA-compliant, to serve our mission and be a welcoming place. Additionally, the church is in the process of ending its legal and financial relationship with the elementary school that the church has run for 230 years. The Alexander Robertson School is becoming a separate not for profit entity, no longer run by the church but continuing to operate within the church building at no charge. This change underscores the church's need to define a new direction separate from running a school.

While we were not sure how we would progress on the mission review during the pandemic, we are heartened to report that during these socially distanced times, the church deepened its connection as a community. And by the time of the widespread realization of another pandemic – systemic racism – members were moved to ask, “What can we do?” With that, the Antiracism group was formed, meeting weekly (virtually) starting in the spring of 2020 with conversation and sharing. The group plans to continue to meet, as this report will detail.

Overall, in this mission review, we share perspectives, concerns, observations, and reflections as expressed in our many vehicles of discernment, to inform the church's mission and service to the community. We remain committed to refining these ideas and translating them into action and a mission statement.

Mission Study Team

The mission study team was formed by the session in early 2019. Six church members in total were involved at different stages of the process. Members of the team that produced this report are: Elder Nancy Hughes, Clerk of Session; Elder Elaine Song; Deacon Gordon Bakoulis; and Interim Pastor, the Rev. Lindsay Borden, *ex officio*. Elder Cecilia Blewer provided invaluable original research into our history. The team also thanks church leaders Karen Amrhein and Lisa Infield-Harm, who participated in the early mission study process.

The Mission Review Process

The congregation began its mission review process shortly after the arrival of Interim Pastor Rev. Lindsay Borden in April 2018. We held our first congregational discussion sessions for mission review in June and October of 2018, which included perspectives on our history and reflections using Scripture on our current life together.

A mission study team was formed in the spring of 2019, during which time the church learned of the Vital Congregations Initiative. Implementation of the USVCS survey suggested by VCI leadership became

the first major task of the team. The survey was administered over the summer with results compiled at the end of the summer. The congregation met in October 2019 to discuss the findings and the conclusions to draw from them, as well as ideas for moving forward.

Another mission-related project during the summer was to consider ways to reach out to the community. In August 2019, several church members met with the Rev. Phil Tom regarding information-gathering about the neighborhood. A result of that meeting was that, during the following months, members interviewed people locally about the changing needs of the area.

By the fall of 2019, the church signed on to the Vital Congregations Initiative. In February 2020, the church began Bible study stemming from the Vital Congregations program. These sessions were planned as a series until Easter, with a focus on discernment for our mission review. Two lively and revealing sessions were held before the church closed for in-person meetings due to the pandemic in March.

The mission study team reconvened in July 2020, to analyze the information collected so far and begin writing the report. In September, we held a congregational meeting over Zoom to discuss our mission and direction based on the information gathered. It was well-attended and led to important ideas, insights, and concerns.

History

In 1756 a small group of members left New York City's first Presbyterian Church to form their own congregation, due to a dispute over psalm tunes. The Scots of that time wanted to adhere to a more strict form of worship. The new church was initially the First Associate Presbyterian Church, and after the Revolution, during which its pastor served as a chaplain in Washington's Continental Army, it incorporated in 1784 as the Scotch Presbyterian Church. It became known colloquially as "the Old Scotch Church." In 1822, it changed its denomination to the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century church members and pastors were active in the civic life of the young city and affiliated with abolitionist, Sabbatarian, and temperance causes. Notably, members bought the freedom of an enslaved girl, Katherine Ferguson (nee Williams), who later founded the first Sabbath School for working children to receive an education on their day off. In 1789, church members also started the city's first coeducational school, which continues today, named after its principal founding benefactor, Alexander Robertson. Early members were involved in the founding of such major local institutions as New York University, Presbyterian Hospital, and Union Theological Seminary.

As the city grew, the church moved uptown from its original location in lower Manhattan, to various locations and buildings, arriving at 96th Street and Central Park West in the 1890s. There, it built a large stone church with a bell tower and separate buildings for the Alexander Robertson School and Manse. At the time it was one of the largest Presbyterian congregations in the city, boasting a membership of 1,097 in 1928.

That year, it engaged with a real estate developer to tear down the church and build the apartment tower at 360 Central Park West, at the base of which the current sanctuary and school are located; apartments for the Manse and sexton are upstairs in the apartment block. The plan was to provide the church with income from apartment rentals, but the developer's default during the Great Depression resulted in financial and legal difficulties, which plagued the church until recently. Finally, in 2012 a

settlement was reached, giving the church ownership of its sanctuary, school, Manse, and sexton apartment, but ceding ownership of the apartment tower to a developer for condominiums.

The real estate settlement also gave the church about \$9.8 million for a small endowment, about half of which the church used for delayed maintenance and repair of its building, and for support of the Alexander Robertson School. In 2019 the church determined that its financial contributions to the school were not sustainable and it was forced to close the school. Providentially, a new non-profit entity was able to assume management and financial responsibility for the school, which remains open and on church premises.

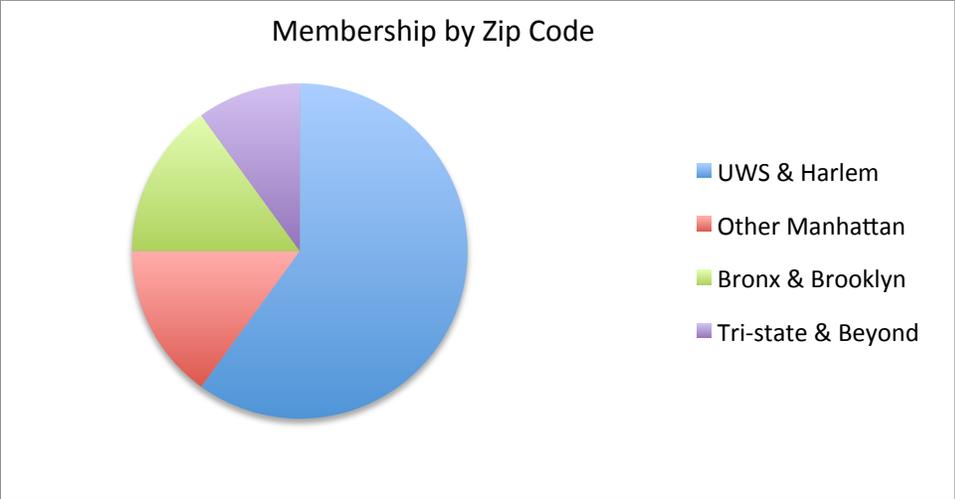
Various Scottish connections continued through the 20th century. For example, during World War II the church hosted the Robert Burns House hostel and Thistle Canteen for servicemen, which won accolades (and a flag which hangs in the sanctuary) from the city of Edinburgh, with which a relationship continued into the 21st century. Various Scottish fraternal societies used the facilities. In the 1950s, the chapel was converted into the Carnegie Library, in an arrangement with the Caledonian Society to house books given to the Society by Andrew Carnegie in the 1890s. Scottish seminary interns served at the church from 1950 until 1997. Although a few traditions survive, in recent years, the number of Scottish members dwindled and membership has grown much more diverse.

The church has had 12 installed pastors, many of whom were Scottish-born and educated. Pastorates have been notable for their length. Current members recall Rev. James Spence, 10th pastor (1950-1980); Rev. Thomas Wilson (1980-1992); and Rev. Leslie Merlin (1997-2017), the church's first female pastor. After Rev. Merlin's retirement in August 2017, Rev. Stephen Phelps served as part-time transitional pastor from September 2017 to March 2018, and Rev. Lindsay Borden has served as full-time Interim Pastor since April 2018.

Congregational Demographics

Current church membership is sixty (60) on the Active Members Roll, in 48 households. Membership has been roughly stable for at least the last 30 years, during which the number of members has ranged from 54 to 72. Over half the members live within the nearest five Zip codes of the Upper West Side and the sections of Harlem that border it (10023-10027), and 75% live in Manhattan. Many of the remaining 25% used to live closer to the church, and have moved away but maintained their ties.

Upper West Side & Harlem (5 zip codes)	36	60%
Other parts of Manhattan	9	15%
Bronx & Brooklyn	9	15%
Tri-state & Beyond	6	10%
Total	60	100%



Members are predominantly female:

Female	43	72%
Male	17	28%
Total	60	100%

... and over 55 years old:

25 & under	6	10%
26-40	4	7%
41-55	13	21%
56-70	19	32%
Over 70	18	30%
Total	60	100%

... in the following housing arrangements:

Married/couple	24	40%
Single, with family	6	10%
Single, living alone	26	43%
In care/nursing home	4	7%
Total	60	100%

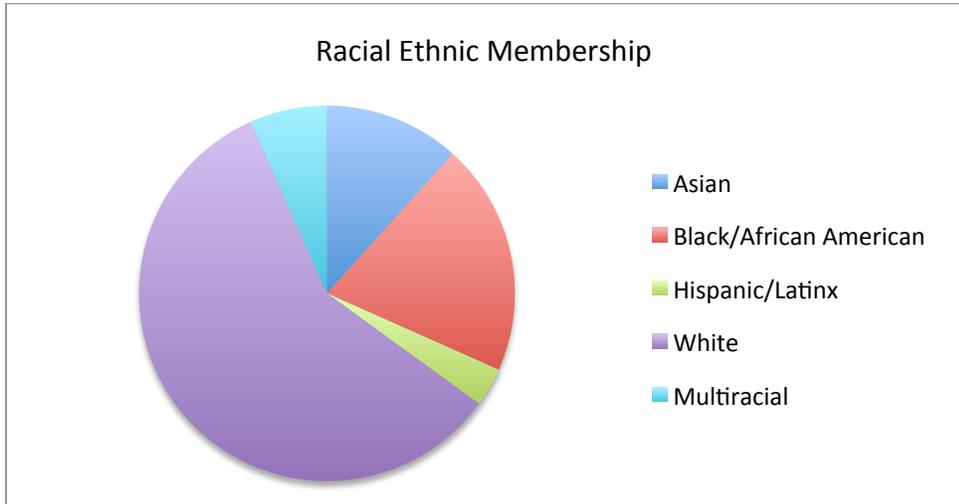
Over two-thirds have been members for more than 10 years. Eighty percent of current members joined during the pastorate of Rev. Leslie Merlin (1998-2017).

Of the 108 members who joined the church since 1998, 50 still remain on the Active Members roll, 48 moved away or left for some other reason, and 10 have died. At least 11 young families who joined the church during that period left when they moved out of the city, due to the rising costs of housing and education, as their families grew.

Nonetheless, children and teens are a valued if small part of our congregation. Currently, 9 families have 11 children under the age of 18. Of those, 3 children of have been confirmed. Among the younger children, generally from 1 to 5 regularly attend worship.

Members self-identify in the following racial ethnic categories:

Asian	7	12%
Black/African American	12	20%
Hispanic/Latinx	2	3%
White	35	58%
Multiracial	4	7%
Total	60	100%



Despite its small size, the congregation boasts a high proportion of members who actively participate in church life. Among the 60 members on the rolls, 37 (62%) participate regularly, for example by holding leadership positions and/or attending worship frequently. Forty-two members were ordained at Second as elders, deacons, or both. However, some 19 members choose to remain on the rolls but participate rarely if at all. Five members were homebound or lived in institutions before the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020; additional members have limited their activities outside the home since the start of the pandemic.

There are also about 8 participants who have not joined as members, but who attend worship, sing in the choir, or maintain other regular connections with the church.

In the summer of 2019, 43 members, staff, and regular non-member worshippers participated in the US Congregational Vitality Survey (USCVS). Results of the survey therefore tend to reflect responses of those most active in the church, rather than all 60 members. The survey reveals a generally well-educated group, with 8% having a high school education, 38% with a bachelor's degree, 38% a master's degree, and 13% a doctorate.

Their responses give some insight into the views of the congregation:

Political Orientation:

5%	More on the conservative side
24%	More on the moderate side
71%	More on the liberal side

Theological Orientation:

5%	More on the conservative side
46%	More on the moderate side
49%	More on the liberal side

Pre-tax income levels (among the 43-person USCVS survey population) ranged across the spectrum, with roughly one-third reporting incomes below \$50,000 (about half of whom have incomes less than \$25,000), one-third in the \$50-\$100,000 range, and one-third reporting incomes above \$100,000.

Of the roughly 40 members and friends who participate regularly in church leadership and activities, 100% also donate regularly to the church. Among the remaining members, most give little or nothing financially.

Who We Are

Members of our congregation defy easy description as a group. We are an eclectic mix of individuals from a variety of faith backgrounds, personal backgrounds, and demographics as discussed above. Church members and friends bond across racial, age, and income lines. We consider this a strength.

Members are united by a need to nourish the spirit and find a sense of community in a busy, high-pressured city. During our mission review process, members relayed that the church has had a profound impact on their lives, connected them to God's holy word, and offered a place for reflection. One person said that without this church, they would be "spiritually vacant."

At the same time, members are not seeking uniformity or the adherence to rules. In fact, it is this looser structure and openness that has characterized the church in recent years. That has downsides when it comes to governing, as will be discussed later, but upsides when it comes to welcoming people of different walks of life.

In terms of faith, there are lifelong Presbyterians, those who arrived knowing nothing about Presbyterianism, and those who grew up in other Christian traditions and other faiths or with no organized religion or even belief. The aim is that everyone feel accepted for who they are, and can be who they are when they are at church.

We are generally quiet in our practice and appreciate thoughtful worship and experiences that deepen our faith. We are inward-looking and contained in our outward expressions, some of that due to our Scottish ways, but also due to modest personalities. We are also low key for the most part, which has its advantages and downsides. For example, volunteers who help lead worship vary in their level of preparation and understanding of the roles, though all are well-intentioned in their willingness to help.

An overriding characteristic of the congregation is members' caring and compassion. In the 2019 survey of the congregation, assessing strengths among seven marks of Vital Congregations, Caring Relationships was identified as the top strength. Church members showing up for each other during moments of grief and challenge offer powerful witness of God's love and presence, and continue to build relationships.

We pursue community and caring relationships through our fellowship hours, which are lively and well-attended. In addition to fellowship, we also write cards to members who are unable to come to church.

During our mission study, we affirmed the need to reclaim the meaning of church, which can conjure up negative connotations in everyday conversation, perhaps as old-fashioned, rigid or close-minded. In fact, we believe that the teachings of Scripture are not about maintaining the status quo but striving toward a better world.

In our Antiracism group, formed in the wake of the George Floyd murder, participants shared the need for the church to proclaim its support for justice, such as when we joined marches on every Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Over the years, we have pursued social justice projects and programs to show our caring for our world, but as we discuss later, we are still in the process of discerning where God is calling us now.

Our members are drawn to the small size of the church. They feel comfortable knowing each person in depth, and the size enhances their sense of belonging and togetherness. At the same time, this places the many responsibilities associated with the functions of a full church on a few people. We have been blessed over the years with many strong leaders, but we hope to strengthen our ranks in commitment as well as numbers.

Over the years, the description of our church that we often keep going back to is “small but mighty.” We are small in number but are able to handle many of the seemingly large challenges that have come our way, particularly in terms of responding to several complex legal, business and school-related questions.

In fact, we lived up to this ideal when we negotiated a multimillion-dollar property settlement that secured a monetary payment related to our building ownership. After that, we applied our mighty efforts to turning over the controls of our school to a professional educator, overseeing major structural and electrical work, and this year arranging to take steps for the school to continue as a separate legal entity.

During this interim period, thanks to Rev. Borden, we have spent time instituting much-needed procedures and ways of operating. For example, we revised our by-laws.

Congregational Leadership and Staffing

Session

A session of 9 members, which generally meets monthly and is moderated by the pastor, governs the church. Session annually elects a clerk of session, treasurer of the congregation, commissioner to the Presbytery, and alternate commissioner. The session also functions as trustees of the corporation, for purposes of New York State law, electing as officers of the corporation – a President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The role of church counsel is currently filled by a member of the church, whose firm provides legal services pro bono.

Until January 2020, the church had a separate board of trustees reporting to session, consisting of 6 members. However, the congregation’s small size made it difficult to fill so many leadership positions, so the board of trustees was formally dissolved in 2020 after new by-laws were approved by the congregation. Outgoing trustees were given the option to complete their terms on the session. As a result, 10 ruling elders currently serve on session; the number of session members will revert to 9 as terms expire.

Principal committees of the session are Worship & Music and Finance.

Worship & Music Committee. This committee usually meets monthly, chaired by a session member and open to active members. The pastor and Minister of Music serve *ex officio*. The committee recommends

the planning and implementation of all aspects of regular and special worship services. During the pandemic, it has explored all forms of virtual and recorded, as well as in-person, worship. The committee supports and advises the Minister of Music, who is also responsible for planning concerts.

Finance Committee. This committee usually meets monthly, chaired by a session member and open to active members, and it also includes the Treasurer. The pastor is a member *ex officio*. The Finance Committee is responsible for supervising the bookkeeper and accountant; reviewing church finances periodically and reporting to session; creating the annual budget for session approval; selecting investment advisors and monitoring investments; and managing physical assets, i.e., the facilities, Manse, and sexton's apartment.

Individual members of session or, at times, committees or ad hoc work groups also perform the following functions as needed:

- Archives
- Christian Education
- Congregational Life
- Facilities, including contact with the management of the apartment building
- Membership
- Personnel
- Stewardship

There is a Congregational Nominating Committee with 3 members (one ruling elder, one deacon, and one member at large), elected annually by the congregation; each can serve up to three consecutive one-year terms. It is likely that session will direct the Congregational Nominating Committee to propose the slate for the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Board of Deacons

A board of deacons with 6 members also reports to the session. Deacons' responsibilities include preparing and serving Holy Communion, showing care and concern for the congregation, especially those sick or absent, and coordinating fellowship hour when in-person worship is in session. Deacons also recommend to the session a slate of cash benevolences for local, international, and church-related causes. The responsibilities in Hospitality and Holy Communion are suspended due to COVID restrictions.

Holy Communion. The deacons coordinate communion setup and cleanup as part of worship approximately once a month and also help serve communion. This includes caring for and safely storing supplies used for communion, purchasing bread, and keeping tabs on supplies of grape juice.

Ministry/Outreach. The deacons (along with several elders) are in regular contact with members who are not able to be at worship due to health issues. This ministry included visits (most suspended during COVID), phone calls, emails, and mailing of cards on behalf of the congregation to convey greetings, sympathy, and well-wishes. The Deacons support the pastor in maintaining a prayer list that is included in our bulletin and newsletter and read monthly during worship.

Hospitality. The deacons plan, organize, set up, host, and clean up our post-worship fellowship hour and several larger congregational gatherings during the year. Fellowship hour, a time after worship to socialize and reflect together, features refreshments and hot coffee/tea (September-June), with a more robust “spread” held monthly or on special occasions, such as the Kirking of the Alexander Robertson School (September), World Communion Sunday lunch with the Chinese Community Church (October), and the Christmas pageant (December). The deacons organize and manage the hospitality budget and the purchase of food/supplies for fellowship hour, buying in bulk when possible for convenience and cost-saving.

Recommendations of Benevolences. The deacons meet annually to review and recommend to the session a list of organizations to which to donate benevolence money. In 2020 the session unanimously accepted the deacons’ recommendation to donate to West Side Campaign Against Hunger, Broadway Community, Citymeals on Wheels, God’s Love We Deliver, Sanctuary for Families, Safe Horizon, The Church of Gethsemane in Brooklyn, and the Jacaranda School for Orphans in Malawi.

Staffing

SPC currently has one full-time Interim Pastor, who is head of staff. Other church employees are:

- Full-time Sexton who has an apartment in the building. The sexton is responsible for maintaining the safety and cleanliness of the facility, preparing the sanctuary for worship, managing contractors who work in the building, and so on;
- 2 part-time Assistant Sextons who clean the facility (20 hours per week each);
- Minister of Music, part-time (20 hours per week). In addition to participating in worship and its preparation, and directing the volunteer choir (when active) and soloists, the Minister of Music is responsible for maintaining the organ and pianos, and organizing concerts and other musical events;
- Office Manager, part-time, works from home approximately 12 hours per week. In addition to administrative tasks, the Office Manager also manages space use by outside groups;
- Bookkeeper, part-time (8 hours per week), who is also employed by the Alexander Robertson School, where she works onsite.

Benefits for the pastor and staff are coordinated through the PC(USA) Board of Pensions.

There are several important outside contractors: an accountant who helps manage the bookkeeper; an Owner’s Representative who works on major facilities issues such as renovations; and WebServes, an IT company.

Until 2014, the pastor was the Head of School of the Alexander Robertson School and taught, or co-led, Ethics classes for students, organized service projects, and so on. In 2020, ARS became a separate entity. Since this is a new arrangement, and the separation happened to coincide with the coronavirus pandemic, it is not clear to what extent the pastor may be involved with the school in the future. We expect several traditions to be maintained, including participating in annual holiday programs and graduations and Kirkings of the school. Whether the pastor will engage in teaching or other activities with students, parents, or faculty remains to be seen.

For several years until 1997, the church hosted Scottish Fellows – ministry interns studying at Union Theological Seminary. Reportedly, the Church of Scotland subsequently refused to accept credentialing from Union. After that, the position of seminary assistant continued with American students, but stopped in 2009 when the church was having financial difficulties.

Worship and Fellowship

In-person worship has been suspended during the pandemic. The church has been meeting on Zoom. The information here is based on life before the pandemic.

Worship meets at 10:15 a.m. every Sunday. This time was established to accommodate the worship service of the Chinese Community Church of New York, which has met in our building for 50 years.

Our attendance has been, on average, about 20-25 people, including children and adults. We have a guest book for visitors, and the pastor follows up with anyone who would like to be contacted.

We look to worship as time to learn and reflect on how we can be better people in this time and place. We value thoughtful sermons that speak to our daily lives. Communion is held once per month, usually by Intinction. We have explored other forms of worship such as a Taizé service of silence and song during Advent and Lent. In 2016, we held midweek evening Taizé services. We are also open to and interested in learning about other faiths and in hearing critical views about the Bible.

Members help lead worship, taking roles as liturgist, offering collectors, and greeters. Elders take turns monthly coordinating volunteers for worship. The deacons prepare the Communion table. Elders and deacons help serve Holy Communion.

We also have special services throughout the year. At the beginning of every school year, we hold a Kirking (blessing) of the school, in line with our Scottish heritage, as a Sunday worship service to welcome the school families and staff for the year to come. This celebration includes a bagpiper leading a procession of the school students, family and staff, and a special Fellowship Hour. On Palm Sunday, a bagpiper leads a procession of the congregation as they carry palms. The service is followed by an Agape luncheon, a sit-down potluck event. On World Communion Sunday, we have a joint service with the Chinese Community Church, after which we lunch together, with the meal provided by CCCNY and the dessert provided by SPC.

Note on Zoom Stay-at-Home Worship Gatherings During Pandemic

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to deepen our sense of community through stay-at-home worship. On most Sundays, the sermon/meditation and scripture readings are made available in advance of the service via podcast so that the time on Zoom focuses on prayers of the people. This has created a time of blossoming of our members through prayer.

At this time, we have some concern over what will happen once we resume in-person worship, in terms of including homebound members. As one person said, “Is there a place for us once you have your in-person services and gatherings?”

Children and Youth

Time with Young Disciples is held for children every week during the service, followed by Sunday School. The number of children varies from zero to five at any given time.

Our current Sunday School teacher, Joel Ahn, is the son of Minister of Music Eunjung Ahn and a lifelong Presbyterian. He served his country for two years in the U.S. Navy and is currently studying radiology at Bergen Community College.

In the past, our Sunday School teachers varied in backgrounds. For many years, the teacher was Jewish (an elementary school teacher and a parent of two Alexander Robertson School alumni) familiar with Christian scripture and readings and able to follow the curriculum provided. After she left, a college student who is an Ordained Minister through the United Church taught our Sunday School for a year before moving out of the New York area.

We try to involve our children as much as possible in our worship services. On Sundays when we have Communion, children return from Sunday School to join us. The children have also participated in playing the chimes and singing during worship. We have been blessed to have several children who have gone through the Confirmation process with our pastor.

Music Ministry

Music is deeply important to this congregation. We treasure our organ and have special attachments to hymns. During Advent, we constantly want to sing.

Our small but dedicated volunteer choir, led by our Minister of Music Eunjung Ahn, sings at every worship service from September through June. It rehearses every week and is augmented by paid soloists. The number of singers on any given Sunday ranges from 6 to 8 on average. We have special celebrations on Palm Sunday and Easter, as well as for what we call Music Sunday, in December and June, featuring sacred music selections and additional soloists and instrumentalists. We occasionally play pieces on chimes, with choir and other church members participating.

The church is home to the Austin-Konzelman Organ. Manufactured by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, CT, this organ was, at the time of its dedication in 1929, one of the largest organs in New York City. In 1978, the organ was partially rebuilt and reduced in scope to better meet the needs of the space and the ongoing financial commitments necessary to maintain a pipe organ in excellent condition. James Konzelman (then with the Church Organ Company, Edison, N.J., and now proprietor of Konzelman Organs, Inc., Hoboken, NJ) supervised the project, which included the rebuilding of the great, swell, and pedal divisions and the re-voicing, addition, and subtraction of many ranks throughout the instrument. Currently, the organ has 45 ranks and 2,268 pipes.

The church has an Organ Restoration Fund to help pay for the costs of maintaining the organ; it has been funded by individual donations and suggested donations at concerts. In 2019, the church spent \$20,000 from the Fund for a much-needed upgrade.

The church also has a Steinway grand piano dating to circa 1905. It has been restored in recent years, but currently has structural problems. The church also has two upright pianos and a harpsichord.

Fellowship Hour

Pre-pandemic, we held fellowship hour following worship in the Carnegie Library as a time to enhance our community and build bonds of friendship as we enjoyed coffee, tea, and snacks. The deacons plan and coordinate fellowship hour, including managing a modest budget and ordering and storing supplies, and are supported by members of the congregation.

As noted earlier, we have periodic special fellowship hours for special occasions, including an Agape lunch for Palm Sunday, a reception for families of Alexander Robertson School, and a lunch and dessert on World Communion Sunday with the Chinese Community Church. We have also set aside two times in the year to celebrate birthdays of the children.

Prayer Group

The church holds a monthly prayer group meeting during the week, open to all members. Before the pandemic, it was held in person at the home of a member. It has been meeting virtually during COVID.

Church Facilities

In terms of property, the church owns the church and the school premises, as well as the Manse, on the 15th floor of the apartment block, and the Sexton's apartment next door to the Manse.

For a long time, the church has been used by outside groups and one other church. This provides income for the church. It continues to search for other space users. There are drawbacks, however, in that the building has no air conditioning and no bathroom on the street level. Further details are discussed below.

Church and School Rooms

The church and school building runs the length of the block between 95th and 96th Streets. The church entrance is on 96th Street and the school on 95th Street. On the church side is the sanctuary, balcony, restrooms, and office space off the balcony. The school side has classrooms, restrooms, and a large area for administrative offices.

The school and church share use of three common spaces: the Carnegie Library, adjacent to the sanctuary; the larger basement space which is used as a gym, auditorium, and for shared meals; and the kitchen, which doubles as a science lab made possible through the donations of an ARS alumnus.

The sanctuary's balcony contains seating for worship, but it is not currently set up for public use. The balcony also contains office space for the Minister of Music and an office that has been used by the Pastor since 2016 and is not ideal because it can only be reached by walking up two long flights of stairs. (With the change in the school leadership, the pastor relinquished her large office on the school side of the building.)

Manse and Sexton's Apartment

The Manse contains four bedrooms, a living room, dining room, and eat-in kitchen. It is now in the final stages of an upgrade that has been taking place since the retirement of our last installed pastor. Depending on the needs of any future pastor, one question is whether the Manse may best serve the church as an income-producing asset. The sexton's apartment is a one-bedroom.

The church and school each have a seat on the condominium board of the apartment building. The church pays monthly fees for both housing units but not for the public spaces.

Building Users

The church's main outside user is the Chinese Community Church of New York, which worships Sundays at noon in our sanctuary after Second Church's service. CCCNY has been using our space for 50 years. CCCNY also has office space in the building and uses the building during the week; it is allowed to use many rooms in the building on Sundays. (This use is not continuing during the pandemic.)

Three Alcoholics Anonymous groups have met at the church on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and a theatre troupe has rehearsed there weekly. The school space has been rented during the summers and during late afternoons of the school year, primarily by afterschool programs and day camps.

At one point, Second Church had two other faith congregations, and under current arrangements the church has been unable to meet its budget numbers. The church has sought out other potential users but has so far been unsuccessful.

Repairs and Challenges

A major challenge is that the church building is not ADA-compliant because it has no bathroom on the street level. The church has received funds to install a bathroom and has devoted time, energy, and consultant work exploring a location for a bathroom, but a feasible solution has not yet been found. Another challenge is the lack of air conditioning in the sanctuary, gym, and Carnegie Library. The church is currently exploring options for air conditioning as part of its facilities upgrade.

Recent upgrades to the facility have included repairs to the stone façade and roof, and a major electrical upgrade of both the church and school premises.

Down the line, the church is looking to improve the lighting in the sanctuary as well as to paint the entire sanctuary.

We also note that the front of the church building has been encumbered by a sidewalk bridge for most of the last 14 years. By 2020, the sidewalk bridge had reached the distinction of being up for one of the longest periods in New York City history. The presence of the scaffolding has hindered the church's own ability to market itself. Many in the neighborhood do not even know a church is there.

Finances

The finances are governed by two key factors: 1) The church now has about \$4.8 million left from its real estate settlement. The money is invested in low-risk instruments and is under constant review by the

Finance Committee. 2) A large portion of its revenue comes from the contributions paid by the Chinese Community Church. But every year, the church budget does not break even. There used to be other churches using the premises, but that ended almost 10 years ago. We welcome other inquiries.

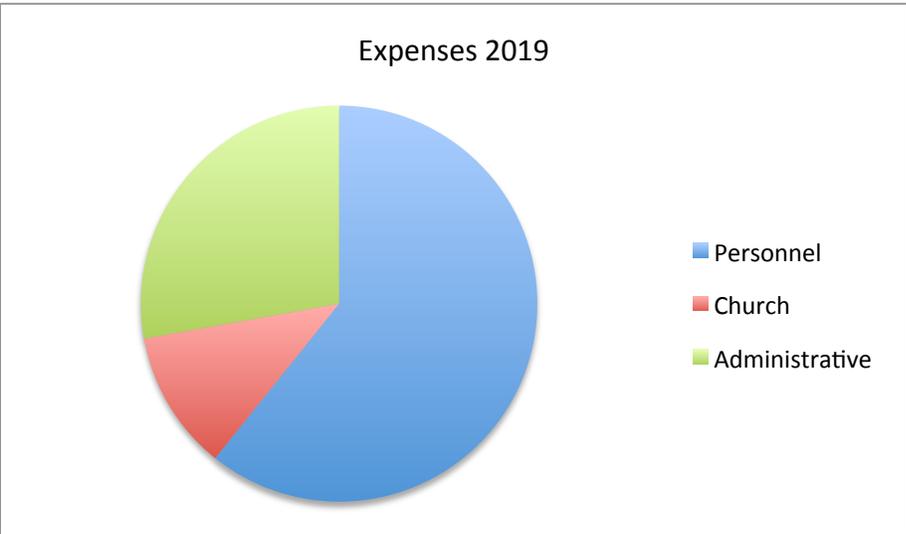
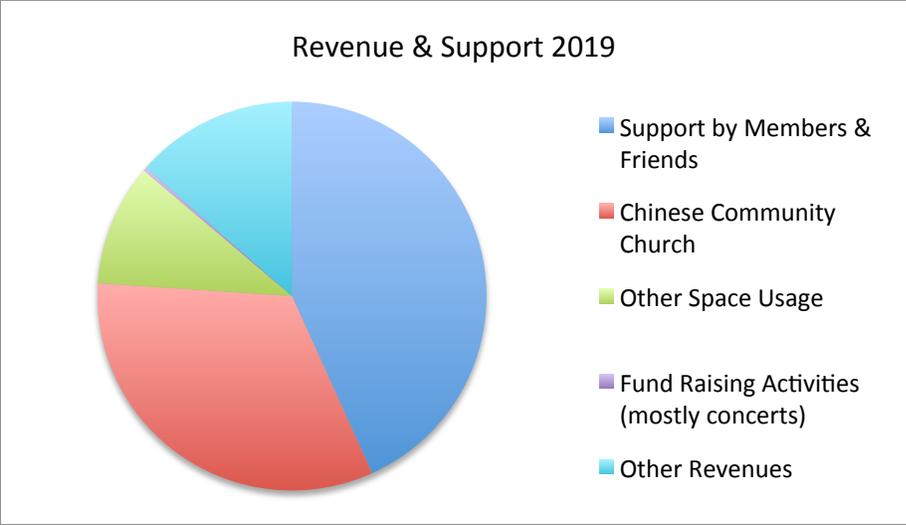
Not including capital maintenance projects, or contributions to the Alexander Robertson School, the church's operating costs have remained quite stable in recent years. The 2019 revenue and expenses presented here reflect church operating costs for a typical pre-pandemic year. 2020 has seen a reduction in income from all sources due to the pandemic, as well as expenses associated with the separation of the school from the church. Also in 2020, part-time contractors were put on staff in order to offer them benefits. The annual operating deficit, expenses associated with the Alexander Robertson School, and capital maintenance projects are paid for by investment income.

Revenue & Support 2019

Support by Members & Friends	\$151,052
Chinese Community Church	\$114,647
Other Space Usage	\$35,461
Fund Raising Activities (mostly concerts)	\$1,035
Other Revenues	\$47,168
TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT	\$349,363

Expenses 2019

Total Staff & Benefits	\$306,204
Church and Mission	
Worship	\$1,858
Benevolence	\$23,130
Special Offerings	\$10,078
Apportionment	\$3,300
Music	\$16,089
Education	\$2,591
Hospitality & Outreach	\$561
Total Church & Mission Expenses	\$57,607
Administration	
Office Expenses	\$4,059
Professional Fees	\$3,314
Building & Improvements	\$69,382
Housekeeping	\$14,018
Insurance	\$25,329
Utilities	\$11,825
Condominium Expenses	\$0
Real Estate Taxes	\$9,246
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$3,106
Total Administrative Expenses	\$140,279
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$504,090



Neighborhood and Community

We offer here a snapshot of external demographics as well as our social, denominational, community, and cultural context, including assessment of community needs.

Second Presbyterian is located on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, across the street from Central Park, close to many subway and bus lines. Over half of our members live within walking distance of the church; another quarter live in Manhattan, with the rest in other boroughs and in New Jersey.

The demographic makeup of the Upper West Side has changed significantly over the past several decades, mainly as a result of gentrification. According to the NYU Furman Center, median household income on the Upper West Side in 2018 was \$123,840, about 91% more than the citywide median household income (\$64,850), and the poverty rate on the Upper West Side was 8.5% in 2018 compared to 17.3% citywide. In 2018, the homeownership rate on the Upper West Side was 37.5%, compared to the citywide rate of 32.8%. The homeownership rate in the neighborhood has increased by 5.5 percentage points since 2010.

The population of the Upper West Side was about 191,222 in 2018, with 68.4% identified as white (compared to 42.7% citywide), 14.1% identified as Hispanic/Latino (29.1% citywide), 10.8% identified as Asian (13.9% citywide), and 4.1% identified as Black (24.3% citywide).

The Upper West Side has a lower crime rate than Manhattan overall, with both property crime and violent crime at less than half the rates in Manhattan overall. The serious crime rate was 8.5 serious crimes per 1,000 residents in 2019, compared to 11.3 serious crimes per 1,000 residents citywide.

Like all of New York City, the Upper West Side is transient due to shifts in employment and educational opportunities; however, there is a large population of longtime residents, particularly among the elderly. This demographic is reflected in the membership of Second Presbyterian Church, which includes a number of longtime Upper West Side residents, particularly among our older members.

The Upper West Side offers many cultural and educational opportunities, from Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary (located about a mile north of Second Presbyterian Church) to Lincoln Center, located about a mile and a half south. The area is known for its excellent public schools, including The Anderson School (a citywide K-8 magnet school) and Booker T. Washington Middle School (an honors 6-8 school).

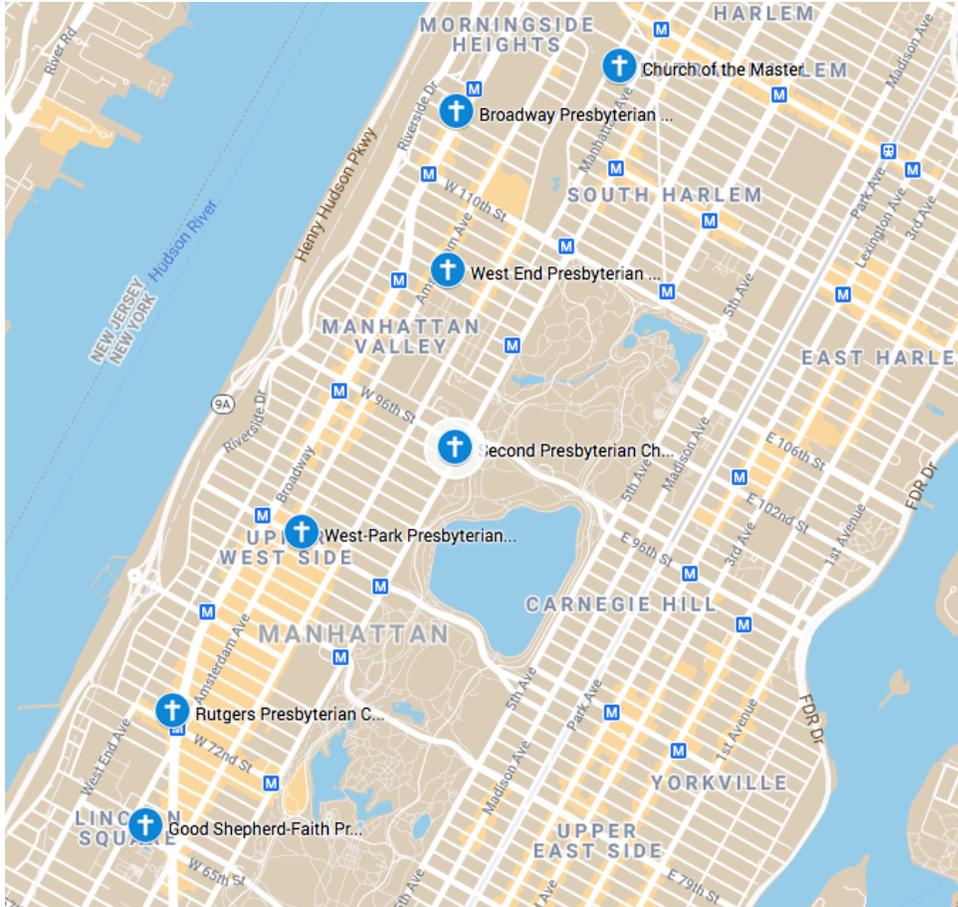
The Upper West Side is also home to a number of world-renowned private K-12 schools including The Trinity School, Collegiate School, and Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School. In 2019, 75.7% of 4th grade students attending schools on the Upper West Side performed at grade level in math, compared to 56.3% in Manhattan and 49.4% citywide; 78.8% of Upper West Side 4th graders performed at grade level in English language arts, compared to 59.2% in Manhattan and 49.6% citywide.

We have defined the Alexander Robertson School as having a special niche within the world of independent schools, in that its small size is advantageous for children who need individualized attention in their formative elementary school years. Its modest but charming physical space offers a low-key feel, and its curriculum's unique offerings include language learning and ethics. Families value the school's strong sense of community and the diversity of its student body.

The Upper West Side has a high level of community engagement, represented by the very active and engaged Community Board 7. Organizations on the Upper West Side with an active volunteer and service presence in the community include the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, Goddard-Riverside Community Center, the West Side Federation of Senior and Supportive Housing, and many others.

Second Presbyterian is one of seven PC(USA) churches on the Upper West Side and the adjacent section of Harlem, in the 3 mile stretch from 66th Street to 121st Street. There is a Presbyterian church roughly every 10 city blocks. Three of those churches, West End, Broadway, and Second, were among the 10

largest churches in the NYC Presbytery in 1928, when they had a combined membership of over 5,000, whereas today, all 7 churches have a total membership of about 500. The map and chart below offer a look at where the churches are located and the number of active members today.



Nearby PC(USA) Churches	Active Members Roll 2019	Location	Zip Code
Good Shepherd-Faith	41	66 St West of Broadway	10023
Rutgers	122	73 St & Broadway	10023
West-Park	27	86 St & Amsterdam Ave	10024
Second	60	96 St & Central Park West	10025
West End	70	105 St & Amsterdam Ave	10025
Broadway	80	114 St & Broadway	10025
Church of the Master	99	121 St & Morningside Ave	10027
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	499		

While there is a history of connection among the clergy, there has been relatively little contact between members of the congregations.

In addition to Presbyterian churches, there are also many other houses of worship nearby. An informal scan of the same area revealed at least 44 groups, including mainstream Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches, several highly visible and active Jewish congregations, and many non-traditional and non-denominational fellowships.

As part of its mission study, in 2019-20, the mission team asked members to conduct outreach to their neighbors to assess community needs. This outreach, along with reflections among our members, identified a number of perceived needs.

At the top of the list were concerns about affordability of basic needs—rents have increased astronomically, there is a greater population of homeless people, and lines for food programs are going around the block.

Also notable, as shared by doormen and shopkeepers, is a higher number of seniors in declining health and with increasing frailty.

Neighbors expressed suggestions as to ways that the church could contribute to the community, citing ideas such as community gatherings and events, talks and fairs. Others said the arts serve as an important way to improve mutual understanding, communication, civility, and community.

Community members also expressed an interest in community/interfaith communication, especially between and among other faiths. Also noted was the benefit of connecting with local schools and colleges.

The neighbors' connections with local small businesses have been strong, especially since the arrival of Whole Foods and other large retail stores on Columbus Avenue. Local businesses play an important role in the church's and school's activities and events. Neighbors expressed support for helping prevent the loss of retail businesses and helping them stay afloat. This was reiterated in the wake of the pandemic.

Other needs included neighborhood clean-up and beautification and more opportunities for recycling and composting.

Our congregational survey in 2019 revealed that Second Presbyterian Church is weak in Evangelism, and members note that we are not strongly connected to the community as a church, despite having many longtime neighborhood residents. This may be due to the small size of our congregation. We recognize that the Upper West Side has many community needs and presents us with many opportunities for community service and engagement in our immediate neighborhood.

Social Justice and Community Connections

The church has taken a variety of steps to connect with the larger community by joining with other churches and church organizations in their ongoing programs. Our collaboration with other churches on the Upper West Side goes back decades.

During our mission review process, we reiterated that working with other churches is a viable way for

us, as a small church, to get involved and contribute to social justice efforts and programs. We have joined different initiatives, which we discuss here. We hope to deepen our commitment as we develop our mission.

One continuous effort that we have pursued is that every Sunday (when we were open for in-person worship) we collected non-perishable food items, which we gave to local food programs.

We continue our relationship with The Church of Gethsemane in Brooklyn. Members of the church have made Saturday visits with leaders at Gethsemane to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. We have also engaged the congregation during Fellowship Hours in writing letters to incarcerated individuals through Gethsemane's Project Connect.

Members also volunteer with the Alexander Robertson School in reading to the students, leading enrichment sessions, and offering other help to teachers. At one point, we had a Mitzvah Committee of families and church members to explore efforts for service.

One effort we have pursued jointly with the school every holiday season for the past two years is singing holiday songs at an assisted living facility in Manhattan.

Over the past five years, we have participated in different projects organized by other churches: 1) at West End Presbyterian Church, we contributed in 2016 to a program for people coming out of homelessness; 2) at Rutgers Presbyterian Church, also in 2016, we collected clothing and household goods for a program to resettle Syrian refugees; and 3) at Broadway Presbyterian Church, we had planned to participate in its volunteer day in March 2020, but the event was canceled due to the pandemic. Through an effort coordinated by Church World Service, we have also written letters to unaccompanied minors from Central America who were being detained in Texas.

In terms of partnerships, we have partnered with the nonprofit Common Humanity. The church served many times as the site of an exhibit of paintings by Iraqi refugee artists living in Syria. In 2019, the church exchanged Christmas cards with people in Syria through Common Humanity. Common Humanity is a peacemaking organization that seeks to build understanding, respect, and friendship with the Middle East and Muslim world.

In the past, we participated in a local peace march on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, joining with other neighborhood faith communities to visit each house of worship and march through the streets chanting and singing songs of peace and racial justice.

Every year, the church donates a percentage of its income from space usage fees to other organizations and churches. In the past year, the church recognized the serious needs that have arisen from food insecurity due to the pandemic, so we gave money to four food relief organizations. It also recognized that during the pandemic, incidents of domestic violence increased, and the church sent money to two organizations that provide hotlines, shelter and other assistance. Church of Gethsemane was also a recipient given our longstanding relationship. We also gave money to the Jacaranda School for Orphans in Malawi, which has a relationship with the Alexander Robertson School.

Antiracism Group. Following the death of George Floyd and the protests and awareness surrounding systemic racism, the church formed an Antiracism group to meet weekly and engage in conversation. It

has been a time to share our personal thoughts and feelings, to learn and to lament the state of our country, while searching for hope in faith.

We have been guided by Bible reflections from the Antiracism study guide of Presbyterian Mission called “Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community.” One recent gathering focused on passages speaking to God’s love of diversity and to justice. At another time, we reflected on the meaning of beloved community and the promise of Isaiah’s call to create new heavens and a new earth.

We also discussed Martin Luther King Jr.’s words in “Letter From a Birmingham Jail,” directed to church leaders, and how racism affects ecology and produces unhealthy environments.

Our focus in these early weeks is on dialogue as a first step to joining our hearts and minds on this real and persistent scourge on our communities. We expect to lead a worship service on the First Sunday of Advent and plan to move to concrete and collective action.

Programs for the Community

Concerts. We hold concerts organized by the Minister of Music; in 2019, they included an organ concert and a flute concert. Other organizations have used our space to perform their concerts; they normally make a contribution. These events have been on pause during the pandemic.

Events and Outreach. The church has held events for the public aimed at helping bring visibility to the church and bring members of the school and church communities together. The events we have hosted in recent years include a Valentine’s Day sing-along, Mardi Gras Musicale on Shrove Tuesday, and Cookies & Carols for the Christmas holidays.

In the past we held bazaars for the community, most recently in the early 2010s, when we determined that these events were a heavy lift (literally) for our congregation with little to no financial remuneration or community engagement.

Communication and Outreach

The question of how to reach people in a very highly populated neighborhood has been explored in different ways. At one point, we were part of a mailing service that went out to “new families” within our Zip code. One effort that did connect us with the community featured banners that we hung outside our entrance. “The God we love is the God who loves everybody” led some people to stop in their tracks.

We have redesigned and upgraded our website, secondpresbyteriannyc.org, so that we can post sermon podcasts and past sermons. We have also enabled online giving, supported by the Presbyterian Foundation. The website has become an increasingly important way to spread information and is often cited when we ask visitors how they heard about us.

On our Facebook page, Second Presbyterian Church, NYC, we post our events and items of interest, and provide opportunities for exchange. Church members monitor and update both our website and our Facebook page. We also have a modest presence on Yelp, YouTube, and Google.

Challenges Ahead

Second Church has shown great resilience over the years as a small congregation with huge responsibilities. As we look ahead, we know that our average age of members is increasing, attendance is not going up, and membership has been growing at a bare trickle. Getting smaller would be difficult for our survival. A second major challenge is that the building is not fully ADA-compliant, and already we have members and visitors who will not (cannot) attend our church because of that. Furthermore, some prospective space use partners are deterred by the lack of accessibility and air conditioning. How the pandemic will affect church-going generally remains to be seen.

Exploring a New Mission

Our church feels called to be a caring and compassionate presence for its members and its surrounding community. We seek to develop a direction that embodies service and commitment particularly to those who are vulnerable. We also continue to honor our deep and historic connection to the Alexander Robertson School, to support the education and spiritual growth of children. However, with the school moving into its own legal entity and run by professionals, it remains a community partner but no longer the mission of the church.

Our current mission statement reflects our willingness to follow God's call for us as individuals and as a community. It reads:

We seek God in this time and place.

We practice welcoming faith, work for peace and justice, and enjoy sincere fellowship.

We are becoming the people God calls us to be.

For the past several years, we have summed up our aspirations with the tagline:
Seeking a better world together.

Heartbreak in our World. During our mission study discussions, church members expressed a strong desire to discern a mission focused on serving the community. While we have over the years pursued many projects and initiatives, as detailed earlier, we seek to define a direction as to where to focus our collective energies. We acknowledge that there are more needs in the community than we have the means to address and that the needs are so pressing that it's hard to prioritize and choose.

In our reflections and in surveying our community, the church has identified several issues of our neighboring community, notably food insecurity, homelessness, and helping seniors. Ideas include developing programs targeting seniors, offering a place to gather and engage in social fellowship, and expanding programs for young families.

In line with our past efforts and in light of the small size of our congregation, there is wide agreement that much can be accomplished by partnering with other churches, which we have done in the past, as mentioned. Another idea is to tap into social service organizations in our neighborhood to join already established volunteer programs.

As the church moves into its next phase, members believe more research and fact-finding are needed into the programs, service, and mission of other churches on the Upper West Side as well as nonprofit

service organizations. Church members would also like to strengthen the church's connections with neighborhood constituents such as the 95th Street Block Association, and with elected officials.

The church is also participating in the Vital Congregations program, whereby it aims to develop further organizational direction and to make deeper connections with other churches.

Social fellowship was also mentioned during our discussions, but all planning and aspirations must be balanced with the practical downside of lack of accessibility of the building.

Members' Needs. In terms of the church's service to its members, members say they value the friendships and social connections of the church, "having people you're going to see every week."

Our reflections also highlighted how those connections deepened, surprisingly, during the closure of the church building as a result of the COVID pandemic. Since March 2020, the church has held worship services on Zoom. While we have not had the fellowship and the intimacy that we experience as a gathered body, the changes have actually brought renewed energy to our life together. Our Zoom gatherings have been better attended than in-person worship, given that people could join from anywhere. In addition, many commented that the format of seeing everyone's faces, rather than the backs of everyone's heads when sitting in pews, deepened a sense of connection and fellowship.

We were able to share the deeply held feelings that we were experiencing together, of both joy and sadness, and express the need for strength and patience. As one member noted, "During this difficult time I'm concerned about the human spirit. The church definitely is like a rock we can all count on."

As stated earlier, we want to be able to continue to resume worship that includes everyone, including those who are homebound.

The pandemic has highlighted numerous pressure points for our members and for our community. At the same time, we realize the world has been changed by the pandemic, and that structures and services are different. In the case of food insecurity and homelessness, it is worse. We hope we can find a way to serve that is feasible for our small congregation and uplifting for our community.

Conclusion – Forging New Paths

After 264 years, Second Church is on its way to a new beginning. Since we no longer administer the school, we can focus on developing our new mission and direction. And with financial resources, we can chart a new path. We are resilient, caring and determined to keep our congregation and church alive and thriving.

We have made strides over the past tumultuous year on our mission, creating regular discussions on antiracism, and awarding benevolence grants to address hunger in the city. We see the need for continued conversations and reflections in the coming months. We also hope to connect with other churches in our neighborhood to learn about our common goals and potential partnerships.

We draw income from our modest endowment, because contributions from our small congregation, plus current space usage fees, do not sustain the church financially. We will need new forms of income.

So it may go without saying – as we set off on a new journey, we seek a pastor who is nimble and adventurous, and who can adapt to the unexpected. If the seas get rough, we want someone who will not only lead us to the next shore but get in the boat with us. Overriding all is a need for one who is warm and caring, connects with people from all walks of life, and embraces community and diversity. Social justice remains important to us.

We continue to seek a better world together though acknowledge we have questions about how to get there. But one thing is clear: We've come this far by faith and fervently wish to keep on singing.

Respectfully Submitted by the Members of the Mission Study Team,

Gordon Bakoulis
Nancy Hughes
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With the support of the Rev. Lindsay Borden