

Journey to 2030

Our Vision Statement

Guided by the Holy Spirit and looking to the future, at the Presbyterian Church of Okemos, we...

... open our doors wide in welcome, inviting all to join us in community, worship, service, and fellowship. *We will* continue to build a congregation where all people can feel accepted, encouraged, and embraced as beloved children of God.

... embark together on a life-long journey of faith formation. *We will* create opportunities for all ages to worship, study, serve, and make music alongside one another.

... know we can't do it alone. *We will* partner with other faith groups and local organizations to pool resources, form community, and work together in service of God's love and justice.

Journey to 2030: Guiding Vision for the PCO

As the Presbyterian Church of Okemos prepares for its 60th anniversary, the congregation has undertaken a self-study and visioning process to prepare for the decade ahead. In addition to the disruption and learning during and after the pandemic, PCO has had significant staff transitions in the last three years. While the congregation is stable both financially and in membership, the leadership charged the Journey to 2030 committee to engage the congregation to understand their perspective on what they would like PCO to look like in 2030.

In the late summer of 2023, the committee began its work to develop a “guiding vision.” In biweekly meetings through the fall, the committee sought to identify ways to facilitate congregational conversations about where PCO is today and where we would like it to be in the coming years. This resulted in a town hall meeting during the education hour, a congregation-wide survey, and additional small group conversations. The survey responses were then distilled into three areas of focus which in turn were developed into our vision statement. To guide session on implementation recommendations are included focused on what is possible with the energy, passion, and capacity of the membership.

Now, the committee is submitting two documents:

- our vision statement that we hope will guide Session and the church’s committees as they go about the work of creating the church that the congregation has articulated
- this report providing further context, explanation, and suggestion.

The timeline:

Town Hall Meeting, November 5, 2023

Interest for this Adult Education/Town Hall meeting was very strong. Approximately fifty (50) members participated actively in the discussion.

We asked the congregation: What do we want to carry forward with us from our past sixty years? What might we want to rethink? Where is God calling us as a congregation? In small groups, we discussed themes around faith formation; mission and service; engagement and community; worship, music, and technology; and fellowship and facility.

Several themes emerged from these town hall conversations. The congregation had a lot of energy around new ideas about faith formation programming, diversity, and facility use. There was some excitement around possible additions to our music program. We came out of the meeting optimistic about new possibilities.

February 2024

Inspired by the conversations around the tables at the town hall, the committee created and distributed a comprehensive survey. We had an excellent response rate with nearly one hundred (100) members responding.

The committee spent considerable time reviewing the responses both individually and together. Some of the questions we asked were: What does the congregation want to preserve and build on? What does the congregation want to change? How will we make decisions about what we have the capacity to do and what we might need to let go?

We learned that the congregation is, in many ways, content **and** we identified several areas that PCO is passionate about and where there are opportunities for growth and change.

Through funds from the PCO Endowment we engaged the services of theological consultant Rev. Sarah Moore-Nokes. She encouraged us to structure our thinking along the following lines:

- statements that provide three things: inspiration, forward motion, and challenge
- statements that highlight areas of broadest support or interest

As we synthesized all the information we gathered *and applied what we know from our various perspectives and experiences*, we identified these three areas of focus:

A welcoming congregation where meaningful connections are made.

A congregation that is intergenerationally inclusive.

A congregation actively building partnerships.

Spring 2024

The Journey to 2030 team presents the vision statement and supporting documents to the session and the congregation ahead of the May 60th anniversary celebration. We know that this work will guide us in this season of PCO and that by 2030 PCO will look different and our priorities might shift and change again. Thus, this isn't intended to be a forever statement.

Areas of Focus From the Survey:

A Welcoming Congregation Where Meaningful Connections Are Made

- While our members believe that PCO is very welcoming today relative to age and family/marital status they also believe we should make a stronger commitment to welcome in areas such as race and ethnicity, educational background and class, and sexual and gender identity
- The desire for PCO to be even more welcoming is reflected in the responses to use of our facility where a significant majority expressed the desire to reach out to the community and invite non-profits, individuals, and clubs and interest groups to share our facility
- When asked if you would prefer a more diverse congregation versus worshipping in the style you grew up in 45% chose more diversity while 40% did not chose a preference

A congregation that is intergenerationally inclusive

- Children and youth programming was identified as one of the top three priorities as we focus on 2030
- High level of interest in support for *Regular Intergenerational* activities in the Christian Education hour
- Significant support for expanded worship opportunities for family and young children

A congregation actively building partnerships

- Significant interest in partnering with programming with other churches
 - Educational programming, joint mission projects, youth group partnerships
- Broad support for sharing our facility with local non-profits, individuals, PCO members, and clubs and interest groups
- Community outreach is chosen as one of the top three priorities as we focus on 2030
- Potential advocacy support for issues such as housing insecurity, gun violence, racial reconciliation, etc.

Recommendations:

Our task was to gather information, discern future direction based on what we learned, and create the vision statement. Implementation, of course, belongs first to the session and pastor and then ultimately to the congregation.

1. We encourage the session to set **tangible goals** related to each of these three statements to keep the mission and ministry moving forward.

(example: Goal - Identify and add at least three new community partners between now and 2030)

2. We strongly encourage the session to create guidelines to help with decision-making for everyone from task group members to the pastors. We recognize that it's easy to add programs and new ministries. It's harder to let go of those that are no longer serving us and our community, but it is essential to make strategic decisions as to how we use our finite resources (people, money, and facility).

(example: Whenever assessing ideas or projects, PCO leaders will first assess PCO's capacity for energy, resources (people, financial and physical), and passion for the idea/project. A simple rubric for assessment that all areas of ministry can use would be useful)

3. We encourage the session to integrate this vision statement into the life of the congregation by including them on printed materials, meeting agenda, bulletins, letterhead etc. We also encourage use of the statement as a way of orienting new members, newly ordained leaders, and as part of important moments in the life of the congregation. We encourage session to report regularly on initiatives that fulfill the vision statements.