

November 15, 2005

To: Brownson Memorial Presbyterian Church Session  
From: Long Range Planning Committee

The Long Range Planning Committee is pleased to offer the following "Actionable Vision Statement" for Brownson Memorial Presbyterian Church.

This statement has three parts: an Overview Description, a series of Vision Guideposts, and Suggested Action Strategies.

This document is the result of six months work by our committee, but its content comes from much conversation with and participation by a much broader church community. Our committee had discussions with the Session, Division Chairs and professional staff to help us assess the "current reality" of the church and to hear each group's interests, concerns and dreams for the future. Most importantly, under the guidance of Larry Peers from The Alban Institute, an all church conference "Hearing God's Call, Shaping Our Future" was held October 14-16, with over 125 Brownson members participating.

The document that follows is not intended to be a "final report", a finished guide that would include all the specific steps the committee recommends to put in place a strategic plan. It is a descriptive vision of what our members hope Brownson Church will look and feel like in 2015. Where specifics are included in that description, they are intended as possible examples of life at Brownson in 2015, not as absolutes of what we do at that time in the future.

One very obvious conclusion that our committee reached in this look at our current reality-and at our future vision is that radical change is not needed to move Brownson forward from where it is today to its desired future. This process has very strongly affirmed that the qualities of life at Brownson that have attracted members over the years are ones that the congregation wants to carry forward into our future. Our vision suggests conscious evolution rather than revolution.

However, some of the action plans that the Session might adopt in pursuit of this vision could feel revolutionary to some. This is the nature of change and change is part of this actionable vision recommendation.

Also, existing projects and activities can now be evaluated and placed within a larger framework of the vision.

As we envision Brownson Church in 2015, in many ways it looks much as it did in 2005. We are a congregation committed to and practicing the following: 1) excellence in worship; 2) growing numerically; 3) sharing our money and time in outreach.

The major difference we see for Brownson in 2015 is the coming to fruition of some long term dreams: 1) a strong children's ministry; 2) a strong youth ministry; 3) a Christian formation program for all ages and stages that deepens our faith, honoring our Reformed tradition yet "always being reformed".

Our committee looks forward to continued discussion with the Session and congregation over this Actionable Vision Statement and welcomes your consideration of what we present.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

The Long Range Planning Committee Members

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**Actionable Vision Statement**  
**For Brownson Memorial Presbyterian Church**

**Overview: Vision**

**Description:**

2015 finds Brownson Memorial Presbyterian Church (BMPC) as a "Church Alive". It is an ever growing church, expanding in its reach into the minds and hearts of its family of members, widening its impact on the local and global communities, and deepening its development of faith among its members. Members of all ages and stages of life look to the church for encouragement and support.

All of us, adults, youth, and children, are generous through the work of the church, are active participants in the life of the church, and are committed to individual and collective pursuits of Christian understanding. Worship remains the cornerstone of Brownson's existence, is steadfast in its reformed traditions and roots, and is continuously reinventing itself in form and delivery to meet the changes of the times and members.

Brownson Church in 2015 is very much a contemporary church in that members find in this church community worship, learning, fellowship and faith development that has a clear and strong impact on the way in which they view their lives and the world around them, and on the way in which they lead their lives.

Brownson Church in 2015 is also very much a traditional church in that its members hold true to beliefs that have been at the core of Christian faith for two thousand years:

- The head of the Church is Jesus Christ. (The Book of Order)
- Our chief end in life is to glorify God and enjoy God forever. (Westminster Shorter Catechism)
- The two greatest commandments are to love God and to love neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-39)

Brownson members seek to live and witness in the church and in the world as called by God, clothed in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and love. (Colossians 3:12, 14)

## **Vision Guideposts:**

- **Brownson Church challenges its members to develop a deeper personal faith.**
- **Brownson Church members act on a strong commitment to lead, support and participate in Christian outreach and mission locally and worldwide.**
- **Brownson Church believes that raising our children and youth as children of God is the responsibility of every member of the congregation.**
- **Brownson Church engages all members, at every age and stage, in active and meaningful education, with a high level of membership participation.**
- **Brownson Church embraces membership growth and supports and encourages active participation by members.**
- **Brownson Church preserves, educates, and shares its Reformed tradition and identity while honoring openness in our expression.**
- **Brownson Church fosters ministry through music and the arts as an integral and important expression of faith.**
- **Brownson Church is a spiritually nurturing and caring congregation.**

## **Vision Guideposts with Discussion Starters**

### **Brownson Church challenges its members to develop a deeper personal faith.**

We provide many learning settings for members to be challenged and to grow their understanding of the Biblical and theological foundations of Christian belief. We encourage members to talk about their faith with one another, to join with and support fellow church members in examining issues of faith.

Yet the church recognizes that it is not enough to challenge its members. As a community of believers, we support one another in our faith journeys. We provide an organized structure of small groups for faith-sharing, prayer and spiritual formation.

### **Brownson Church members act on a strong commitment to lead, support and participate in Christian outreach and mission locally and worldwide.**

The church dedicates a larger percentage of its budget to outreach than any other congregation in the Presbytery. But our financial support is matched by a commitment of every able member to actively work on at least one Brownson outreach team in some capacity-participating on one of the ongoing outreach efforts that BMPC has adopted locally or directly in national or international mission work. That commitment of time and talent begins at Brownson with our children, who are given opportunities to be involved hands-on outreach projects locally and beyond. Brownson focuses its efforts on a selected group of projects and programs.

The church has an ongoing process to identify needs within our local community and to decide whether Brownson should directly address that need. Further, this process serves to determine what actions are required to meet specific needs, to identify and recruit partners in the effort and to act boldly with the human and financial resources to initiate and continue those acts of support. The process also includes a periodic review of all existing outreach and mission programs.

Brownson's facilities are an important resource in local outreach and mission; the buildings are alive every day with church and community programs. Nationally and internationally, various Brownson groups travel each year for mission work, and the church supports a handful of missionaries in field service.

### **Brownson Church believes that raising our children and youth as children of God is the responsibility of every member of the congregation.**

Church members take their baptismal vows seriously. The passing on of fundamental beliefs, biblical understanding and values of our Christian faith and heritage to children and youth are of the highest priority and quality. Brownson parents commit to the participation of their children and youth in Brownson's

Christian Education program and to regular attendance as a family in worship. In return, Brownson offers children a loving environment in which to form their personal and shared faith; a large and active group of caring adults as teachers and leaders; a well executed curriculum for learning; and living examples of how they can put their faith into action in worship, prayer and service.

Parents see daily the congregation's dedication to making their children full participants in the active life of the church, being nurtured as a human expression of God's love for them. Children and youth see the church as a second home, and the church has a full schedule of programs and activities throughout every week designed to attract and enrich church members and non-members alike.

**Brownson Church engages all members, at every age and stage, in active and meaningful education, with a high level of membership participation.**

Brownson recognizes that members have varied interests and different needs for spiritual and intellectual nourishment. Brownson offers dozens of weekly learning settings. Leaders from staff and laity are very well trained. Teaching and curriculum is sequenced and integrated. There is a strong sense of continuity of teaching, but also openness to having seekers join group study in progress. There is an organized and effective system in place to help guide all members to learning opportunities that will be most meaningful to them, especially for new members or for members who are returning, with encouragement, to renewed participation.

Brownson recognizes that learning happens at many times and in many settings, in varied styles of presentation and participation. Study groups are designed to be available to as many members as possible in spite of other time constraints and commitments. Non-members are welcomed and encouraged to participate and our programs are an important part of both outreach and membership development.

**Brownson Church embraces membership growth and supports and encourages active participation by members.**

Brownson has an active and successful process for inviting non-members to attend worship and learning programs. Brownson members are serious but enthusiastic in their role in welcoming visitors and new members, and the welcoming atmosphere is apparent and genuine. The staff and congregation have organization in place to introduce new members into smaller group settings so that they can quickly build new friendships within the congregation and develop the strong sense of belonging that Brownson members feel so deeply. Every Brownson member can identify at least one small group within the church of which they are a part and with whose members they feel a strong sense of mutual and shared support. This effort extends to members who have not been active in church life. Welcoming them takes a different, more personalized form.

As part of an overall communications plan, prospective members, new members and returning members are given information on learning groups and roles for service in worship, teaching and outreach; they are each invited and encouraged to take a role and mentors act to support and guide their activity.

**Brownson Church preserves, educates, and shares its Reformed tradition and identity while honoring openness in our expression.**

Brownson acts on the belief that there is a level of understanding of the reformed tradition that all members should share. Brownson members, no matter what background; experience, and church tradition they arrive with, participate in an educational program that explores Reformed Presbyterian belief and tradition, including history, theology, doctrine and practice. Brownson recognizes that while confession, prayer, thanksgiving and scripture are fundamental elements of worship, there are different styles of worship that are meaningful to different worshipers. The church offers regular and special worship services at a variety of times and in varying styles to be convenient and appealing to members.

**Brownson Church fosters ministry through music and the arts as an integral and important expression of faith.**

Adults, children and youth participate actively in choirs and regularly perform music, drama and dance as an expression of their faith and witness.

**Brownson Church is a spiritually nurturing and caring congregation.**

## Suggested Action Strategies

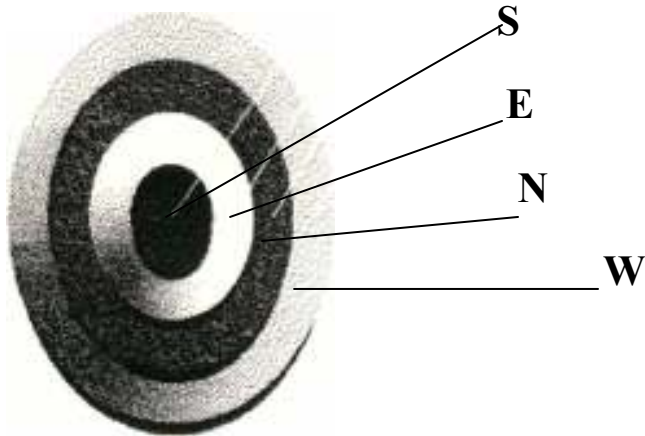
1. The Long Range Planning Committee would commit to remaining intact for the next year to work with the Session and congregation to put in place a process for moving toward the Actionable Vision if asked to do so by the Session.
2. As Larry Peers writes in his "Reflections on the All-Church Visioning and Planning Conference", the Session would "Allow the emergence of some "ministry teams" that can operate within and beyond the current committee structure." Peers suggests that after the church "discern(s) which directions are critical to where God is calling you in the future... , you can orient your committees and emerging "ministry teams" to focus on these directions.
3. The Session would devote time each fall to create a plan of work for the following year that identifies specific actions to move the church closer to realizing the Actionable Vision.
4. In its written plan of work for the upcoming year, the Session., divisions, committees and ministry teams would use a format that links a specific action to an Actionable Vision Guidepost. The form of this linkage is "in service of . . . we will. . ." statements. For example:

"In service of embracing membership growth and supporting and encouraging active participation by members, we will organize "welcoming corps" that will greet visitors and members alike and invite them to be active participants in the life of Brownson Church.
5. As part of the plan creation, the Session would refer to the points made by Larry Peers in his "cultural change for Mainline Churches" presentation to ensure that the plan reflects and reinforces these cultural issues.

### Attachments:

1. WNES Systems (Church Systems) handout from Larry Peers
2. Cultural Changes for Mainline Churches from Larry Peers
3. Top 7 External Trend Affecting BMPC from All Church Conference

Attachment 1



**W The welcoming system** is a web of fluid relationships, serving as an entry point for life into your congregation. This includes working positively to attract newcomers in a safe environment in which all members can explore spirituality and community.

**N The nurturing system** nourishes the new life that has been introduced into the congregation as an organism and helps the newcomers deepen their spiritual life support groups, classes, workshops, worship opportunities, or meeting activities.

**E The empowering system** finds ways to help each person to discover his or her spiritual gifts and passions; it supports people in using them for the benefit of the entire congregation. The vision of the “priesthood of all believers” –becomes more of an observable reality.

**S The Serving system** recognizes that service to others is a powerful way for an individual to grow spiritually. Service is a way for servant-leaders to emerge. The congregation is attentive to providing support and recognition for individuals to grow through serving others—and using one’s gifts, talents, or passion in meaningful and powerful ways.

## Attachment 2

### Cultural Change for Mainline Churches

1. From civic faith to human transformation
2. From assuming the good to delivering the goods
3. From givers to receivers who give
4. From board culture to ministry culture
5. Budget: From ends to means
6. From democracy to discernment
7. From fellowship to hospitality
8. Membership Growth: From passive to active

## Attachment 3

### Top 7 External Trends Affecting BMPC

1. Changes in family structure (53 votes)
2. Changes in morals/situational morals (38 votes)
3. Lack of quality Christian education (37 votes)
4. Increased competition for church time (29 votes)
5. Pockets of local poverty (27 votes)
6. Rise of fundamentalism/religious right (27 votes)
7. Contemporary worship (vs. traditional worship) (25 votes)