

## Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian Church Vitality Team Recommendations

\*Approved by session on October 18, 2021

\*The three recommendations are divided into the 3 W's of our mission statement: Welcome, Worship, and Witness.

\*Specifics of recommended actions will be worked out by committees and task forces subject to the approval of session.

1) Recommendation for Welcome: *Create* inviting spaces outdoors for people of all ages to worship, learn, and fellowship.

Rationale: Paul Nixon also opened the eyes of the Vitality Team to the tremendous possibilities of our outdoor space for these small group gatherings. Sitting in the Ebenezer in the woods, he remarked, “*This* is your most beautiful building!” He noted several times that our grounds have the feel of a retreat center, a refuge of green space and God’s grace away from the hustle-bustle and development of the surrounding community.

In order to most effectively manage the growth of our membership in an area experiencing a rapid population increase, Paul Nixon highlighted the importance of small groups (roughly 5 to 20 people) for fellowship and study in the life of a church. The Vitality Team believes it is a priority to further develop our outdoor spaces and then encourage congregation members to use them for groups of all sizes, including outdoor worship.

2) Recommendation for Worship: *Continue* to offer two Sunday morning services with fellowship time in between and live stream ministry

Rationale: The Vitality Team notes that some parishioners expressed a desire to return to one service in the congregational survey. However, Paul Nixon strongly recommends that we continue the current two service format. Services at two different times provide flexibility for more worshippers. This schedule affords the creative use of our outdoor campus for many months of the year. It invites reflection on the creative use of children’s ministry. It increases the number of worshippers we reach, while maintaining the quality and cohesiveness of our ministry in style and content.

3) Recommendation for Witness: *Claim* the designation of Chapel in the Pines as a Matthew 25 congregation

Rationale: By a large margin, the two most cited needs by congregation members in the survey were (1) a robust children's and youth program and (2) a concentrated effort to help people in need in the larger community. Paul Nixon is adamant that these two ideas are not in competition. Rather, they are both signs of a vital church ministry. It is Both/And ministry!

The Matthew 25 Initiative in the PC (USA) stresses both "congregational vitality" and ministry to "the least of these" or most vulnerable in our society. The Vitality Team believes that boldly claiming the Matthew 25 identity will energize and unify the congregation as we return from the pandemic.