

Mission Task Force Report
May 30, 2023

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” – Luke 4: 18-19

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28: 18-20

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” – John 20: 21

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Introduction:

Over the past two decades, Piedmont Community Church (PCC) has greatly increased its commitment to, and activity in, living out the Christian mission of “bringing good news to the poor” and serving those in need beyond the boundaries of our own congregation. Looking to the future, the February 2022 Mission Study Report stated:

Although our commitment to mission is listed as one of our strengths, we realize that our world is changing quickly and that we need to adjust how “we do mission.” We need to provide mission opportunities that are not routine in action and episodic, but rather result in the creation of relationships between people and organizations, and nurture both the giver and the receiver to continue on this path.

In response, the Board of Trustees appointed The Mission Task Force of Piedmont Community Church in June 2022 with the charge to define mission and in so doing, clarify the use of terms that are used in our congregation to label similar activities: service, outreach, and mission. This report highlights the work of the Mission Task Force and includes recommendations for PCC to pursue in the area of mission.

Definition of Mission:

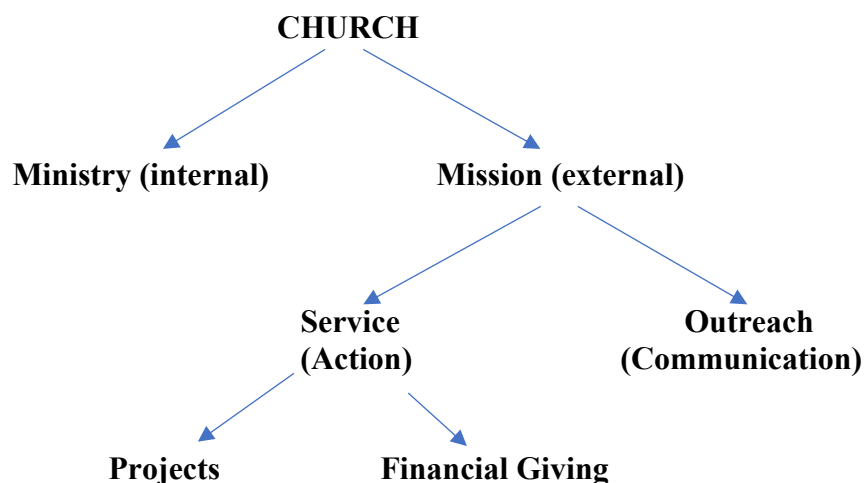
The English word “mission” comes from the Latin *missio*, which means “to send.” In the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish people are called by God and sent on a mission to be “a light unto the nations,” or to the whole world (Isaiah 42: 6). They are “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).” In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus calls his followers to the same mission. As he refers to it, they are to inaugurate the “Kingdom of God” on earth “as it is in heaven.” In John’s Gospel, the commandment is to “love one another” in word and in deed. Putting it all together: The call of all Christians is to live into the Good News of Christ. As best we can, we are to build God’s realm of love, peace, wholeness, healing, justice, joy, and communion with God and with all of creation. A useful distinction here is between

“ministry” and “mission.” When we live out our calling within our own congregation, it is called “ministry.” When God sends us beyond the community, it is called “mission.”

The Task Force addressed the reality that some people are uncomfortable with the word “mission,” given that, over the centuries, its use has been abused by followers of Jesus - whether to forcibly convert people to the faith, to destroy native cultures, or to abuse those who don’t agree with some part of the Christian message. These abuses should be acknowledged and are a cause for humble repentance. Yet, it is also true that much good has been done by missionaries in the name of Jesus. Recognizing this complex history, the Task Force agreed that the word “mission” should be retained to signify the overall outward-focused work of PCC on behalf of the poor, the marginalized and those who need to hear and experience the Good News of God’s love. Therefore, the Mission Task Force has determined the following distinct definitions:

- **“Mission”**: Crossing a boundary to share the love of God – whatever the boundary might be; between those “inside” and “outside” of the church, geographic or cultural division, or any barrier standing in the way of recognizing, affirming, and nurturing our common humanity with neighbors near and far.
- **“Service”**: The ways in which “participants” from the church pursue mission actively through financial giving and projects to benefit “recipients” (those in need). In addition to benefiting recipients, service projects: 1) allow participants to live out their faith in action; 2) promote fellowship among participants and with recipients, and 3) expose participants to the circumstances faced by recipients and the work of mission partners to address their needs.
- **“Outreach”**: How the church communicates the Good News of God’s love through written or verbal channels “outside” of the church.

RECOMMENDATION #1: In light of these distinctions, change the “Outreach Committee” of the Board of Deacons to the “Service Committee,” which clarifies its role in providing periodic service opportunities to PCC members and friends (such as providing Christmas gift boxes for CityTeam). The chart below illustrates how mission, service and outreach fit within the overall structure of the church.



Philosophy of Mission:

The call to “cross boundaries to share the love of God” guides our philosophy of mission, which involves the following key characteristics:

1. **Integral** – The centrality of mission should be stressed continually as part of PCC’s identity as a church. We are a community with many gifts, passions and skills. Therefore, individual members should be encouraged to seek out ways to serve and give beyond the church, and the Church should provide clear information and guidance on how to do so. Not every individual can find time, or is physically able, to do a service project but everyone can do something to further God’s mission of love beyond the church.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Members of each ministry group at PCC are encouraged to take part in at least one PCC-sponsored service project per year – as a group or individually. Groups can organize their own project or join in one that’s already organized by PCC.

2. **Relational**– In the New Testament, “partnership” refers to a relationship of mutual dependence, trust, respect, compassion and love – between God and a particular church community, among members of that community, and between the church and people in the broader community.

RECOMMENDATION #3: PCC should actively seek, and work with, designated “partners” in the broader community to engage in mission. Such mission partnerships should be based on: shared values, regular channels of communication, accountability and transparency with regard to goals and actions, and an expectation of mutuality. For partnerships to exist and flourish, PCC should limit the number to no more than 4 mission partners, although PCC may also give money to and/or publicize the work of other organizations, such as through the Alternative Gift Market and Better World Fund. For partnerships to bear fruit, they must be intentional, consistently nurtured, and manageable in scope. In addition, mission partners need not explicitly identify as “Christian,” if their work is consistent with, and accepting of, the mission of the church on behalf of God. Thus, being a PCC mission partner involves:

- *Access and Awareness* -- offering a Moment for Mission in at least 1 worship service per year. A space at the church will have information about how to get involved in the organization’s work posted prominently on a consistent basis. In consultation with the Mission Committee, partners may recruit volunteers as needed onsite at PCC and use PCC media for publicity.
- *Ongoing Financial Support* – making an annual contribution from the Mission Fund.
- *Service Opportunities* –organizing ongoing and, if possible, suitable for all ages.

- *Mission Committee Advocate* –having at least one person who is an active member of the PCC Mission Committee, who is up to date on what is happening at the organization.
 - *Annual Mutual Strategic Planning* –representatives of the partner meeting annually with the Mission Committee to plan activities for the coming year.
 - *Evaluation* –being reevaluated annually to maintain their status.
3. **Impactful** – Each mission project or monetary donation should make a substantive, long-term difference in the lives of people in need.

RECOMMENDATION #4: The PCC Mission Committee [see Recommendation #7 below] should set, and periodically review, priorities regarding the type of service projects undertaken and monetary donations given as well as their effectiveness. Those priorities can change over time - whether the emphasis is on health, or housing, or education - but there should be broadly accepted and clearly communicated criteria for why we serve with, and give to, particular agencies or causes.

4. **Multigenerational** – Recognizing that service and giving are not just for adults or for youth travelling to Mexico one week a year, PCC should provide opportunities for families, children, and people of all ages to get involved however they can in mission. Not every opportunity will work for every person.

RECOMMENDATION #5: The Mission Committee should solicit ideas from parents of children and youth about what kinds of projects and giving opportunities would be most appealing and doable. The Committee should also always seek the perspective of the “younger generation” when making decisions about projects and funding in the area of mission. [Further recommendations to promote mission intergenerationally are on pages 6 and 7]

5. **Motivational** – PCC should actively encourage people from beyond the church to get involved in service projects and monetary giving. This is beneficial in at least two ways. First, more people can get involved in doing good things to help those in need. Second, PCC can invite and attract people to get involved in other aspects of the church’s life. The intention to provide avenues for service to the community beyond the church is not simply to convert someone to Christianity. Even so, in pursuing God’s mission of love, healing, peace, and justice, PCC should be clear about why we serve and give “in the name of Jesus.”

RECOMMENDATION #6: PCC should communicate service and giving opportunities sponsored by the church using onsite church signage and local media (i.e., outside of PCC).

Organizing Mission:

Currently, mission activities at PCC are organized by the Mission Action Team (MAT), which reports to the Board of Deacons. MAT consists of up to 12 church members approved by the Deacons, along with at least three representatives from the Board of

Deacons and the Minister responsible for mission. MAT chooses a Chair, and its activities are reported to the Deacons through the Deacon representatives on MAT. MAT budget recommendations on mission funding are submitted to the Board of Deacons for review and then passed on to the Board of Trustees for approval. The current organization is cumbersome and does not represent the importance that PCC places on mission activities. In addition, charging MAT with the responsibility to organize and conduct most service opportunities puts a large burden on the members of MAT rather than spreading mission activities more widely throughout the church.

RECOMMENDATION #7: To achieve PCC’s goals for mission, the following organizational structure is proposed.

1. Coordination of mission activities will move organizationally away from the Board of Deacons and into an independent Mission Committee (which may, or may not, retain the name “Mission Action Team”), which reports to the Board of Trustees.
2. The Mission Committee will meet monthly. It will consist of the Committee Chair (an *ex officio* member of the Trustees), at least one member of the Deacons (usually from the Outreach Committee), and one member of the CE Board, and up to 9 church members approved by the Mission Committee. The pastor responsible for mission will attend meetings.
3. The Chair of the Mission Committee will be chosen by the members of the Committee and will attend meetings of the Board of Trustees as an *ex officio* voting member. If the Chair cannot attend a Trustees meeting another member of the Mission Committee can attend, and vote, in their place.
4. The Mission Committee will be responsible for establishing and promoting PCC’s mission goals and objectives. While overseeing mission activities, the committee will not be solely responsible for organizing all service projects within the church. Other groups may engage in service projects, informing the Mission Committee to publicize, guide and track all service projects sponsored by the church.
5. The Mission Committee will be responsible for evaluating and recommending PCC Mission Partners and coordinating with them on a regular basis. Partners will be reevaluated each year.
6. The Mission Committee will be responsible for evaluating and recommending expenditures from the Mission Accrual Fund and the Better World Fund, as well as special offerings and funding. The Mission Committee will track the overall use of PCC Mission Funding and report the same to the Trustees. Individuals who want to give monetary donations to PCC for Mission activities may designate that their gift go toward one of our Mission Partners, or to the Better World Fund.
7. The Refugee Task Force will report to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis and coordinate with the Mission Committee for ongoing support.

Funding Mission:

Currently, mission, service and outreach at PCC is funded through several sources. The Deacon Accrual Fund is part of the annual budget, providing funds to non-profit organizations recommended by the MAT to the Board of Deacons before review and

approval by the Board of Trustees. The Better World Fund was established as part of a capital campaign several years ago to fund grants for global and local non-profits to start new programs. Better World Fund grants are recommended by the MAT to the Deacons and approved by the Board of Trustees. The BWF has been replenished by fund-raising such as through Pick-a-Parties or bequests. The annual Alternative Gift Market during the Christmas season allows individuals to contribute to local and international non-profits selected and vetted by MAT. The Youth Mexico trip is funded through fees paid by participants and fund-raising, including PCC's annual Treasure Sale.

RECOMMENDATION #8: To clarify how funding for mission is raised, accounted for, and dispersed, the Mission Task Force makes the following proposals.

1. The existing "Deacon Accrual Fund" will be renamed the "Mission Fund."
2. Designated Mission Partners will receive 80% of the amount budgeted annually for the Mission Fund. These partners will receive the funding to use for general operations or specific projects and be required to report back to the Mission Committee on how the funds are used and the overall organizational results.
3. The remaining 20% of the Mission Fund will go into the Better World Fund. These monies will be used to provide grants to non-profit organizations. The organizations do not need to be designated as "mission partners," and could be either local or global. The Mission Committee will use existing processes and procedures developed by the MAT to recommend grants for the Better World Fund.
4. Mission spending will be determined annually based on the current budget. For example, if the amount in the church budget in a year designated for "mission" is \$50,000; then \$40,000 would be split among 4 Mission Partners at \$10,000 each, while \$10,000 would be put into the Better World Fund.
5. Monies allocated from the Mission Fund to the Better World Fund will be dispersed within 12 months of allocation.
6. It should be a goal of PCC to increase the amount of money available in the Mission Fund over time.
7. The Mission Committee is responsible for tracking fund-raising activities for mission at PCC and may coordinate efforts to raise funds on occasion.

Involving Families and Children in Mission:

Currently, the role of children and youth in mission at PCC is unclear and ad hoc.¹ Various groups have a role in organizing service opportunities for children and youth including the Christian Education Board, MAT, and the Board of Deacons. The role of youth in mission at PCC is currently focused mainly on the trip to Mexico and the efforts leading up to it, such as the Mexico Rock planning meetings, the Treasure Sale and the requirement for each Mexico team to engage in 2 local service projects prior to the trip (such as serving food at CityTeam or at a food distribution center).

¹ At PCC, "children" are defined as 6th grade and younger, "youth" are defined as 7th-12th grade.

RECOMMENDATION #9: To better organize and communicate the role of children, youth and families in Mission at PCC, the following structures and processes are proposed:

1. A member of the Christian Education Board will attend meetings of the Mission Committee. This requires that these groups meet at different times and days.
2. The Mission Committee and the Christian Education Board will plan quarterly Mission activities for children. These Mission activities may occur off-site; for example, volunteering at the site of a Mission partner; preparing something at PCC that will benefit a Mission partner or community group; or participating in a larger volunteer activity, such as a beach cleanup or a community food bank. Preferably, the Mission Committee and Christian Education Board will identify these activities far in advance at a planning session and place them on the church calendar to allow sufficient time to announce the event and its details to inform PCC members, attendees, and friends through the website, newsletter, and during church services.
3. The Mission Committee and the Christian Education Board should plan two Mission activities for youth, one of which includes the Mexico Mission. The second Mission activity may consider the need for youth to complete volunteer hours for school and passion projects for college. As applies to the Mexico Mission, youth beyond our church members will be encouraged to participate in a planned activity or the activity may focus on the youth that attend church or are family members of church members (e.g., children, grandchildren).
4. The Mission Committee and Christian Education Board should provide summaries of the Mission activities and identify children and youth speakers to share their experiences during church services.
5. An annual assessment or report of the activities and role of children and youth in PCC Mission activities should be developed, with wins, challenges, and opportunities identified among the Mission Committee and the Christian Education Board to provide lessons learned and direction that PCC should take with children and youth in Mission going forward.

Mission Trips:

For many years, PCC has participated in short-term mission trips (STM). Most STM have been overseas, although a few trips taken PCC to other parts of the USA. The main focus has been on the annual Youth Mexico Trip, yet PCC has sponsored mission trips for adults and youth to Malawi and adult mission trips to Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines and Ecuador. In the past 5 years, we have not pursued STM – aside from the Youth Mexico trip – mainly because of the COVID pandemic. The rationale for STM is as follows:

Christians can engage in God’s mission of peace, justice and reconciliation anywhere – near at hand or far away. Specifically, STM is a way for participants to respond to God’s invitation to meet, serve and learn from people “on the margins” (STM recipients) through mutual work, worship and the building of relationships. In doing so, participants can be transformed by cross-cultural

interaction and the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, by regularly reflecting on and sharing their experiences with others “back home,” and by connecting consistently with STM recipients, participants can be agents of change to promote mission in their own community.²

RECOMMENDATION #10: The Mission Committee will investigate the level of interest in pursuing future mission trips beyond the Youth Mexico trip. One possible methodology to utilize is “appreciative inquiry,” which involves gathering a group of interested people and guiding them through a process beginning with what they value most about their experiences with STM and culminating in action steps that are in alignment with the values of PCC. Once such a process is completed, the Mission Committee will decide further steps regarding mission trips.

Conclusion:

There are many opportunities for PCC to explore with regard to mission in both the short and long term. There are already things PCC does well, and there are opportunities for improvement. Given that mission at PCC happens in so many different ways, it is important to clarify the church’s vision and better organize efforts to support mission now and in the future. With the establishment of a new Mission Committee of the Board of Trustees and with the other recommendations included in this report, the members of the Mission Task Force are hopeful our congregation can faithfully and effectively pursue the mission God has given us as a church well into the future.

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² Paraphrased from, *Sanctified Sight-Seeing or Transformative Encounter: Short-Term Mission Trips in Theological and Historical Perspective*, p. 156. Don Ashburn, 2014.