

Strategic Plan – Mission to North America
Church Planting, Campus Ministry, and Evangelism and Discipleship
(Adopted, January 9, 2018)

In keeping with the Vision Statement of First Presbyterian Church of Jackson that it “exists to glorify God by making disciples on the North State Street corridor, in the greater Jackson area, and around the world,” the Mission to North America Committee (MNA) of First Presbyterian Church of Jackson has adopted the following Mission Statement:

Our mission is to encourage, equip, and enable God’s people to share God’s love, in word and deed, by working to establish gospel-centered, mercy-loving, and grace-filled communities primarily through newly planted churches and on college campuses - locally, regionally, and nationally.

A. MOTIVATING CONVICTIONS

Motivating Convictions are those basic affirmations about God, His nature, His mission, His church, and His world that fuel our commitment to mission and define His inescapable call for us. So, what fundamental convictions motivate us in mission?

1. God’s Mission

We begin by defining our mission. If God is our Lord and King, then our mission, as those called by the grace and mercy of God, out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9) means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation, and with God’s resources, to participate in God’s own mission to seek and save His people. This mission is an “activity of the church” but is God’s mission – initiated by God to be accomplished by the Spirit of God, toward God’s destined end – all for God’s own glory.

This “mission” is fundamentally about the very nature and character of God. There is something about God that makes this mission inevitable and irrepressible. God is a missionary God. As Jesus noted: “[T]rue worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, **for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.**” (John 4:23). Both individually (as His children and members in His kingdom) and collectively (as His bride, the church), we have the privilege of participating in His mission with him and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We are committed to this mission because it is God’s own mission that flows from God’s own character.

2. Scripture is the narrative of God’s mission.

The Bible does not just contain a few texts that just happen to provide rationale for mission. Rather, all of Scripture tells the story of the mission of God in human history making Himself known to and seeking after sinful humanity. Scripture begins with God’s purpose in creation, reveals the conflicts generated by human rebellion against that purpose, and is the story of God’s redemptive purposes being worked out throughout human history, until it climaxes in the new

creation. The Bible is not just a book that talks about mission from time to time; it is the story of God's mission for the world – a “rescue mission” – to “seek and save the lost.” (Luke 19:10).

We are committed to this mission because the narrative of Scripture reflects the mission of God – seeking after His people to make Himself known to them.

3. Indicatives and Imperatives in Mission

Indicatives refer to who we are – they are our DNA. An indicative is a property or a characteristic. *Imperatives* are commands – they are what we are to do. In the Bible, particularly in Paul's letters, the imperative flow from the indicatives; the indicative precedes the imperative. Imperatives are rooted in indicatives. Indicatives fuel and motivate our following the imperatives.

Our understanding of mission is often limited to the imperative. “Go ye therefore...” – so we go. A complete understanding of the basis for mission however, understands mission in the indicative. Who we are defines our mission apart from any explicit command. As God's people and as co-participants in His mission, we ourselves are a missionary community, just as God is a missionary God. We are a called people, and we are sent people. Just as mission is the very nature and character of God, so is it also to be the essential identity of the church. And it is from the basis of our missionary identity – our characteristics, our DNA – that the imperatives are given. Our mandate for mission (both individually and as the church) is not primarily a collection of missionary imperatives, but in the understanding, recognition, and affirmation of our own identity as God's people who are engaged in God's mission. Because of who we are, and because of what God has done for us through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, we are made to be part of God's mission. We are not our own; our lives are missionary lives.

We are committed to mission because our very identity demands it – we are a missionary people.

4. Mission and Worship

Mission is not an end unto itself. It is because God alone is worthy of all worship from every tribe and nation, and every people and tongue, that we engage in mission. And it because our desire is to see Christ exalted to the ends of the earth, that we are committed to God's global purposes. We affirm with John Piper:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. (*Let the Nations Be Glad!* at 11).

Missions is a temporary, but present, necessity. The Church must take the Gospel into the world to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20) so that those may fulfill their primary purpose in this life – to glorify God and enjoy him forever. As Kevin DeYoung expressed it:

The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord Jesus and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father. (*What is the Mission of the Church?* at 62)

We are committed to mission because God alone is worthy to be praised in all the earth.

B. OUR STRATEGIC VISION

Our Strategic Vision is what places flesh and bone on our Motivating Convictions. How do these Motivating Convictions find *particular* expression at First Presbyterian Church? How will we, as a particular body of believers, utilize our finite supply of time, resources and energy for mission? The Strategic Vision provides focus and direction for us as we are faced with innumerable urgent and competing needs that we cannot meet. We begin by recognizing, and we are immensely grateful for, other communities of believers whose strategic vision and priorities differs greatly from our own. We rejoice that through God's providence, while there is one body, there are many parts with different functions and callings (see Rom. 12: 4-8; 1 Cor. 12: 12-27).

We believe that we are called to focus on two primary areas of strategic importance for our MNA mission: Church Planting and Campus Ministry. (While some related Evangelism and Discipleship ministries could still be supported by MNA, we believe that any significant Evangelism and Discipleship ministries should be supported by the Benevolence Budget rather than by MNA.)

Within Church Planting and Campus Ministry (and even Evangelism and Discipleship), we also will establish priorities and areas of focus. These priorities should not be understood to exclude alternatives or to preclude creativity or flexibility. There may be ministry opportunities, cooperative efforts, or partnerships that may arise from time to time that do not fit neatly within these stated priorities but to which we are called to respond affirmatively. Still, we are committed to allocating our resources and focusing and working with others who are best aligned to our Strategic Vision.

1. Ministry Focus: Church-Planting and Campus Ministry

We will focus our resources primarily on Church Planting efforts and Campus Ministry.

We believe that the church is the primary, God-ordained means for Christian witness in the world. While there are many worthy para-church ministries and organizations, our mission focus will center on the church. It is through the planting, nurturing, revitalizing, and reproducing of vibrant churches that the gospel of Christ is proclaimed and fleshed-out to those who have not yet heard or believed. It is the church, in all its imperfections, that is Christ's Bride, and that should reflect God's mission to the surrounding community and to the world.

Church Planting and Campus Ministry fill different roles in this process. Each has a different target audience, and each will use different techniques and methods, but both will share the same

Gospel. Each will have a different effect on the church, but both are integrally connected to the mission of the church. Church Planting focuses directly on the mission of the church here and now, while Campus Ministry often plants the seeds that are harvested more fully by the various churches that students join after they complete their secondary education.

As stated below, because we believe that the church is the primary, God-ordained means for Christian witness in the world, Church Planting and Campus Ministry are the primary and secondary goals of MNA because they are the most effective evangelism and discipleship ministries, so our support for other evangelism and discipleship ministries of MNA ordinarily will be related to Church Planting and Campus Ministry, and necessarily will be limited. If an Evangelism and Discipleship ministry is significant, but does not meet our strategic focus, it may be considered for support by the Benevolence Budget of the Church instead of through the MNA budget.

2. Allocation of Assets: Desired Percentages

To accomplish our mission, we believe that we should allocate assets available to the MNA Committee as follows:

Church Planting – 45%

Campus Ministry – 35%

Evangelism and Discipleship – 5%

MNA General Fund – 5% (approximately 10% of Church Planting Funds/Contributions)

Short-term Mission Trips – 5%

Visitation Budget – 5%

I. CHURCH PLANTING

A. Reasons for Church Planting

We want to emphasize starting or planting churches for both theological and practical reasons. Here are six reasons for established churches to plant churches:¹

1. People need Jesus. *Christianity Today* says church planting has replaced crusade evangelism as the preferred evangelistic method for evangelicals in North America today. Church planting has been successful in establishing new churches. It's difficult to deny the fact

¹ Paraphrased from Ed Stetzer, *6 Reasons Established Churches Should Plant Churches*, *Christianity Today* (November 10, 2014), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/november/6-reasons-established-churches-should-plant-churches.html>.

that church plants reach more lost people with the good news, and since people need Jesus we need a whole lot more church planting.

2. It is the New Testament pattern. In the biblical record, we constantly see churches sending people to other churches, starting churches, and checking on how churches are doing. That's what a heart set on multiplication does. That's what Great Commission churches do. When the apostles and disciples heard the Great Commission, we might consider what they did in response. They did not just evangelize. They congregationalized. When the disciples heard the Great Commission, they planted churches. So should we. When the (relatively) established church at Antioch heard from the Holy Spirit, they sent out Barnabas and Saul to plant churches. So should we.

3. For any denomination to thrive, it has to plant churches. If a denomination has 100 churches, it needs to plant three each year just to break even. It needs to plant five churches each year to grow, and 10 each year to thrive. That means our churches need to be actively and consistently training and sending out planters. When the disciples heard the Great Commission, they planted churches. So should we.

4. We need to plant churches because planting churches actually can help your church. The established church is blessed by planting churches. A recent study by Jeff Farmer compared several dozen churches of all sizes that were planting churches with several dozen churches that were not planting churches. Churches that were planting churches—similar sizes, similar backgrounds—were healthier than those that did not. It wasn't merely that the churches were already healthy and then planted. In many cases, the act of planting itself helped these churches become more healthy. It was a product of planting. Planting can benefit a plateaued church. When a church is planted and your people start hearing the amazing stories of people being reached for Christ, it causes them to realize that what God does in church plants, He also can do in established churches. It develops a missional passion and a holy desire to trust the Lord and work toward the same end. They get to ride the tide the church plant rides. Established churches need to plant churches so they can be challenged by their own church plants.

5. Planting churches is required to reach all of North America with the good news of Jesus Christ. It's going to take thousands upon thousands of more churches to accomplish this. That's not only because of geography, but also because of culture—that's part of having a missiological lens that leads to church planting among different kinds of people. Your context isn't one culture. It's not like one flat pancake, where you look out and only see what you see up close—a context like yours. It's more like a waffle with divots, and in those divots are people with certain customs and cultures. Established churches should plant churches because we need all kinds of churches to reach the all kinds of people living in different cultures and contexts.

6. We need some skin in the game. Denominational giving toward church planting isn't enough. We need to put our own sweat and tears into the process. We need partnerships or we will become a cul-de-sac on the Great Commission highway. Planting a church is like having kids. It's bloody, messy, there's a lot of yelling, but then a beautiful thing is born and you forget about all the problems and you want to do it again. When a church is engaged in church planting

directly—not solely through giving to the denomination or a network, as good as that can be—then you’ll see some beautiful church babies born in your own house. Then you’ll want to do it again and again. Established churches need to plant churches so they can experience the blessing of having ecclesiological babies!

No one thinks they are fully ready to have a child. But then you have one, and it is a great blessing. Too often, established churches think they will plant when they are “ready” when they are big enough or when they have more money, but “ready” never comes. If you will just go and have a baby—go plant a church—you will be blessed in ways you never imagined, and you will wonder why you waited so long.

Let’s plant churches that plant churches that plant churches. Let’s trust God to do the things that God likes. God likes to surprise people who have faith in Him. Let’s surprise the world by seeing a church multiplication movement birthed that sweeps across this country as churches choose to sacrifice. Let’s plant churches that plant churches that plant churches.

B. Priorities for Church Planting

We recognize that God can be at work in more than one place at a time! Still, while we want to plant churches both locally and regionally, our priority in allocating our resources for church planting will be to plant what we hope and pray will be strategic churches in key urban centers.

1. Strategic Cities

While we will look at appropriate opportunities to plant churches locally and regionally, we will look to invest most of our resources in Church Planting in national cities of strategic influence.

(a) Urbanization

The urbanization of the United States is well-documented. In 1890, only 35% of the nation lived in urban areas, but a century later, that number had swelled to 78%. In the last 20 years, that number has increased to 80.7%. That percentage is projected to continue to rise. As one professor of urban growth recently noted, there will continue to be “a multigenerational pattern of young adults preferring more expensive urban areas over lower-cost rural ones because the lifestyles and opportunities in such places make the extra burden of cost worth it.” In Arlington, Virginia, the number of millennials increased by 82% from 2007 to 2013. The cities are attracting people, especially younger people, many from unchurched backgrounds who have never clearly heard the Gospel, who come from all across the country and from around the world. City churches are hubs of relationships that link back to family or colleagues across the nation and around the world. Large cities are both magnets – drawing people into them – and transmitters and amplifiers – broadcasting the gospel out into the hinterlands.

(b) The Strategic Importance of Cities

The strategic importance of cities extends beyond the mere logic of numbers. Cities represent centers of political, economic, intellectual and cultural influence, and they exert that influence locally, regionally and nationally, and for some, even globally. A reflection on our current post-Christian era in our country underscores just how critical it is to saturate these cities with churches that worship the true and living God. These churches would stand as communities whose manner of living (openness, brokenness, and loving service) serves as a contrast to and prophetic critique of our modern idolatries, and who have the courage, discernment, and wisdom to engage the dominant culture. The challenge of a planted church would be to live — to do much good — so that the natives will want to meet our King (1 Pet. 2:12).

In light of this sustained movement into major urban centers, we believe that in order to reach the entire nation with the gospel of Christ, we must reach these strategic city centers. This is not to neglect the importance of suburban communities surrounding those urban centers or rural communities. We also need to be responsive to opportunities there as well, but we believe that our resources need to be focused more toward strategic city centers. We believe that the most strategic way to reach the nation, including those suburban and rural communities is to have vital, missional, gospel-centered church planting movements in urban centers here in the United States. There will continue to be an influx of people into these strategic cities, and those city churches can serve as the base from which suburban and rural communities can also be reached. Our focus on global cities is to “show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:7)

Our focus on major cities of strategic importance is not a matter of seeking to reach the only the elite, but to reach all areas of these cities. Just as cities are centers of political, economic, intellectual and cultural power, they are also concentrated areas of injustice, poverty, racism, violence and immorality. Although these also exist in non-urban settings, they are perpetuated to far greater degrees in cities. In short, we want to reach and minister to both the “outsider” (socially, financially, ethnically, and politically) while also ministering to the “insiders.”

We want to seek the welfare of these strategic cities, just as the Lord told Jeremiah: *“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* Jeremiah 29:7. We believe that God will use His people to be a blessing to these cities through these planted churches.

(c) Urbanites as “Unreached People Groups”

Although we often think of “unreached people groups” as those persons living under repressive regimes or in fundamentalist Islamic countries, or in remote regions of the world, if one stops to think about our own country and current cultural and legal developments, it is clear to see that many folks in these strategic urban centers have never “heard” the Gospel, and therefore are part of an “unreached people group.”

Our Missions to the World Committee has made a priority for reaching “unreached people groups.” Many of the two billion people in the world who are essentially cut off from the Gospel

live in major urban centers. We believe our church planting efforts also should seek to reach these people, and planting churches in strategic cities is our way of doing that.

(d) Geographic Focus: Major Cities of Strategic Influence

We will seek to utilize our resources in connection with Church Planting in major cities of strategic influence where there are few, if any, Gospel-centered churches. To the extent these cities are within a non-stop flight from Jackson or are within a four hour drive of Jackson, it would facilitate a more hands-on involvement.

2. Regional Churches

Despite our region being known as “the buckle of the Bible belt,” there are many cities where there is no strong reformed church. By teaming with Reformed University Ministries, we have the ability to help plant churches in cities in our region whether there is a college campus on which an RUF ministry either presently exists or is planned. Another advantage of planting regional churches is that they typically are within a several hour drive of First Presbyterian Church. We could also join with other local churches, either individually or through support to the Mid-South Church Planting Network, in these regional church planting efforts.

3. Local/Rural Churches

At the same time, we must remember that God calls people from all areas and all walks of life. Even Jesus grew up in the “backwoods” of Nazareth in Galilee.² Also, in Isaiah 49:6, we are told: “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Rural America is often overlooked in church planting efforts, but the eternal destinies of those living in rural America are just as important as those who have migrated to urban centers.

The Gospel is clearly needed in the rural areas of our country to address not only the spiritual needs, but also social and physical needs. As reported in a *Wall Street Journal* article entitled: “*Rural America is the New ‘Inner City’*”:

Starting in the 1980s, the nation’s basket cases were its urban areas—where a toxic stew of crime, drugs and suburban flight conspired to make large cities the slowest-growing and most troubled places. Today, however, a *Wall Street Journal* analysis shows that by many key measures of socioeconomic well-being, those charts have flipped. In terms of poverty, college attainment, teenage births, divorce, death rates from heart disease and cancer, reliance on federal disability insurance and male labor-force participation, rural counties now rank the worst among the four major U.S. population groupings (the others are big cities, suburbs and medium or small metro areas). In fact, the total rural population—accounting for births, deaths and migration—has declined for five straight years.³

² See John 1:46: “Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

³ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/rural-america-is-the-new-inner-city-1495817008>.

We recognize that a significant number of unchurched people reside in rural communities. This fact, coupled with the deteriorating spiritual condition of rural areas and the unique challenges of small-town communities in today's world, cries out for rural America not to be forgotten in our church planting efforts. Still, although we may want to provide some financial and other assistance to church planting efforts in these rural communities, this would not be our highest priority in terms of the allocation of our limited resources.

4. Multicultural / Ethnic Churches

The predominant model for churches today is the homogenous, monocultural kind of church plants because it is easier to reach people "like us." Most people come to Christ without crossing social, economic, and racial barriers.

There is a movement in church planting today that puts a high emphasis on developing a multicultural model. Many folks, particularly millennials, want to be a part of a multicultural church. It can be said that a multicultural church is a better reflection of the kingdom because God is calling "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" to the marriage feast of the Lamb.⁴

The church is called to be both a sign and an instrument of the kingdom of God. It's an instrument in the kingdom of God in that it is God's agent in the world sharing the word of Jesus to a broken and hurting world. It is also a sign in the kingdom of God - a credible witness to the kingdom - because people are supposed to look into the church and say, "That's what the kingdom of God looks like." A multicultural church is a foretaste of the family of God we will experience in eternity. Doing multicultural ministry is a gift because it gives us a glimpse of forever.

Multicultural church planting must embrace distinctness in diversity and value what each person brings to the table. We must be at a place where we value those from different background and perspectives. When we ask ourselves, "What does a multicultural church planting focus look like?" we must be prepared to approach it in a completely different manner with different expectations than the monocultural church planting effort with which we are much more familiar and comfortable.

C. Core Values (*What defines us?*)

Our Core Values represent what we hope will be evident about our mission partners and us as we participate in the movement of God's love towards all peoples.

1. Church-Planting

As described above, we believe in the missionary vocation of the church and the essential role of the church as the bearers of God's kingdom to the world. We hope we are defined in our

⁴ Rev. 7:9

endeavors and in our partnerships by a high-regard for Christ's bride. Therefore we are committed to being a church planting church – locally, regionally and nationally.

2. Gospel-Centered

The gospel shapes every aspect of life and conduct. The gospel is the good news, proclaimed throughout Scripture, of God's passionate, sacrificial love for His children. In Jesus Christ and Him crucified, there is full salvation and redemption for all who believe. This faith and trust in Jesus Christ, through the grace-filled work of the Holy Spirit, unites us to Christ, and in Him we are made new and are enabled to live for God's glory more and more. As we experience God's love in this way, we are compelled to engage those around us with Christ-like love for Jesus' sake. God's love for us motivates and fuels our love for Him, as well as our desire to participate with Him in His mission.

3. Missional (“self-reproducing”)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Matt. 28:19-20. We are called by God to share the good news of the Gospel, but we are also directed to teach and disciple others. We are not always called to lead, but to create true disciples of Christ who know His love and word and can then share it with others. We are therefore committed to be involved with movements whose vision and directive is to produce disciples who are empowered to go and share the gospel within their own context.

4. Engaging the Culture

God's love and grace compels us both to share the truth of the Gospel and to love our neighbor. We desire to have all of life in every sphere brought under the Lordship of Christ and therefore are committed to being a church which seeks to share the truth and beauty of the Gospel and to engage the culture from a Christ-centered and biblically rooted foundation.

5. Partnerships

As a church we are committed to being in intentional relationships and partnerships with other like-minded believers and organizations. We are not “Lone Rangers” with respect to church planting. We want to work with others who share our vision and who have insights, resources, or opportunities that we, at First Presbyterian Church, do not have by ourselves. (See Ecclesiastes 4:12: “And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”) There are other ministries with whom we can partner to plant churches that we could not plant by ourselves. At the same time, we realize that with the resources that have been given to us by God, we are committed to a more focused “rifle” approach to missions instead of a scattered “shotgun” model. We will focus on specific efforts and regions, seeking to ensure that our church-planting partners are supported financially, spiritually and emotionally before seeking to add additional partners.

6. Flexible in Methodology.

While we must be firm and hold fast to the teaching of the Gospel, we also need to be flexible and adaptable in our methodology in order to communicate the Gospel to people where they are. As Paul expressed in 1 Cor. 9:19-23:

¹⁹For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. **I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.** ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

(emphasis added).

7. Twin Lakes Fellowship Talking Points.

First Presbyterian Church has previously adopted the “Twin Lakes Fellowship Talking Points,” which are “Fifteen ‘Talking Points’ for the Future (important for reformation, revitalization and church planting).” While those Talking Points are written to respond to certain trends in “the visible Church, in American culture in general and Presbyterianism in particular, including the liberalism of many mainline churches and the fact that many evangelical churches reflect the culture more than the Gospel, they do offer insights into certain ways the church can once again become distinct from the world in order to fulfill her mission.

II. CAMPUS MINISTRY

A. Reasons for Campus Ministry – Why College Ministry?

1. The college years are formative years when many students are open to the shaping of their worldview.

For most college students, this season of life is uniquely formative. Most students are moving away from home and starting the process of trying to figure out who they are, what they believe, and what they’re going to do with their life. College students are very open to new ideas. They are just beginning to develop intellectually and many other ways. It is a time of asking “big questions” and partaking in new experiences. It is a time of being exposed to and influenced by new people and new and different ideas. They’re seeking answers to questions like, “How did I get here and why do I exist? Is there a God? Does life have a purpose? Should I be religious? Are all religions the same?” Many college students have never heard the Gospel before, but are open to investigating and understanding it. It is such an important time to plant a robust Christian faith in their hearts and in their minds. For their sake and the sake of the people their lives will influence, truthful answers must be provided, and the ultimate source of truth is

the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our trained campus ministers and their staff are on campus and involved in the lives of students to give answers to these questions. The need for truth and clarity on these eternal issues is greater today than ever before. Similarly, many covenant children are deepened and rooted in their faith while at college.

2. The future leaders of society are on our campuses. As Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as “Cru”) noted: “Reach the campus today; reach the world tomorrow.” Dr. Bright recognized that when students’ lives were changed by Jesus Christ, they would change the world around them. Virtually all of our leaders (political, business, educational, financial, medical, and legal) have passed through the college and university system. In every critical aspect of a nation’s culture, the campus is where we find the future leaders and influencers.

3. Campus ministry educates and trains future church leaders. Campus ministry in general, and RUF in particular, is a tremendous natural organic leadership development pipeline for the church. Students learn to follow Christ and serve Him boldly. The campus is not only the source of the next generation of business, government, and educational leaders, but it’s also where we find the next generation of church leaders and cross-cultural missionaries.

4. Campus ministry trains and prepares future pastors and church planters. Campus ministers and RUF staff can see what is coming in the culture because they are working with college students. They are on the cutting edge of culture, and have insights into what the country is going to be like 15 years from now. They learn evangelism. They also learn entrepreneurship because every campus ministry, to a certain extent, is unique and every campus minister has to learn what works in that particular environment. Because they are entrepreneurs, because they are evangelistic, because they see the culture coming, and because there is a natural pipeline moving from student leader to intern to campus minister, RUF offers the church an unparalleled way of developing strong entrepreneurial evangelistic pastors and leaders. Most denominations don’t have anything like it as a leadership development structure.

5. When we reach a student, we reach a family. Moms, dads, brothers, and sisters are often impacted by the stories from students who return home with a changed life. The New Testament pattern of church growth showed entire families turning to Christ. That hasn’t changed. One weekend home visit from a student transformed by the gospel can start a spiritual chain reaction that impacts every member of their family.

6. The values on campus become the values in society. The philosophy, morality, and ethics taught by professors on university campuses slowly but surely work their way into public policy, media, and education. Those ideas and values become preserved for decades through legislation, education, music, movies, literature, and media.

7. International students impact their nations. International students represent the top one percent of the students in their home nations. Many of these students come from nations that restrict or ban the gospel. By reaching them while they’re on our campuses and sending them home with the gospel, we can broaden the gospel’s reach in the world.

B. Priorities for Campus Ministry – Core Beliefs

1. **First Priority for Campus Ministry.** We believe that our first priority is to support the campus ministry of Reformed University Ministries (“RUM” or “RUF”), the campus ministry of the Presbyterian Church in America. RUF holds to the core beliefs of historic Christianity which motivate our heart for God and love for the university. Here are some of those beliefs that make this college ministry our top priority for campus ministry:

- **Authority of Scriptures.** We believe in the full authority, sufficiency, and infallibility of the Bible. In an age of uncertainty and skepticism we affirm that the Scriptures truthfully tell us all that we need to know about Jesus and how we are called to live our lives in response to his gospel.
- **The Need.** We believe that the greatest need of every human being is for new life in Jesus Christ. Although the world makes many promises of significance and security, we affirm that knowing Jesus is our only hope for life in this world and the world to come.
- **The Mission.** We believe the mission of the church is to gather people into the new community of Christ and to help them become more like Jesus. This means we are committed to communicating the message of the gospel to all people and to strengthening the faith and life of Christians through the means God has appointed.
- **The Purpose.** The purpose of RUF is to build a community on the college campus that reaches students of divergent beliefs and doubts with the message of the gospel and equips them to love and serve Jesus and his church. As we shape our lives around the gospel we have the opportunity to participate in God’s work of changing lives, healing our world, building community, and renewing our culture. We aim to do this by pursuing the following goals:
 - **Growth in Grace.** The way in which we grow in the Christian life is the same way in which we enter it - by receiving Jesus and relying on what he has done for us by his grace. That is why we are devoted to helping one another use the means of grace God has given us to promote our growth in Christ-likeness. We affirm that deep, lasting change occurs by studying the Bible, developing a prayer life, participating in worship, and forming authentic relationships with others.
 - **Evangelism and Missions.** We believe the gospel is true, and, therefore, it cannot be kept to ourselves. We are committed to thoughtfully and respectfully communicating the gospel through the words we speak, the deeds we perform, and the community we embody so that we might give others the opportunity to discover the true story of God’s grace. And since the salvation Jesus brings is comprehensive and affects the whole person, we are committed to tangibly expressing God’s care for the world by seeking wholeness for the poor, justice for the oppressed, and restoration for creation.
 - **Fellowship and Service.** Jesus not only calls us to follow him as individuals, but also gathers us into a community in which we learn to apply the gospel to every aspect of our lives. In our relationships with one another, we strive to reflect the

countercultural values of the gospel, and as we do we provide the world around us with a glimpse of who God is and what his coming kingdom entails. In light of the fact that God calls us to himself in order to be a vehicle of blessing to others, we are committed to sacrificially serving others on our campus and in our world.

- **Biblical World and Life View.** Christianity is a way of seeing all of life. Rather than dividing the world into sacred and secular realms, we recognize that every sphere of life belongs to God and provides us with an opportunity to serve him. We aim, therefore, to discern our unique vocations within the world and to pursue them with excellence, distinctiveness, and integrity so that our university as well as our culture might experience the renewal of the gospel.
- **Ordained Campus Ministers.** RUF is a ministry of students to students which takes place under the spiritual guidance and oversight of ordained campus ministers and their staff. RUF is a great way to reach college students for Christ. RUF sends ordained campus ministers to the campus to communicate the gospel and to pastor students through their college years in order to equip them for a lifetime of ministry within the local church and world. Seminary training enables campus ministers to effectively anticipate and address the questions and challenges students face in a university setting.
- **Connection to the Local Church.** RUF seeks to instill within students a deep love for the church. To that end, RUF campus ministers maintain close relationships with local churches and often lead in worship, preach, and serve the sacraments. Campus ministers also direct students towards local churches so that they might experience a more robust community of faith during their college years. The rich diversity of the local church in terms of age, race, class, and vocation brings the even greater diversity of the worldwide church into sharp focus. Participation in RUF and a local church during the college years prepares students well for commitment and service to the church upon graduation.

2. **Other Priorities.** This is not to say that no other campus ministry should be supported by the MNA Committee, but a compelling case will need to be made to support another campus ministry, particularly if it is on the same campus as an RUF ministry and focused on the general college student. Examples of other such ministries are specialized ministries such as Christian Medical and Dental Society or Cru's International ministry on a college campus. A child of First Presbyterian Church who is involved in some other evangelical campus ministry would be another exception to the general rule that RUF is the campus ministry to be supported by our Church.

C. Geographic Focus for Campus Ministry

The primary geographical focus for campus ministry is first to those colleges and universities in Mississippi, with particular emphasis given to those colleges and universities which our covenant children attend or those in the Jackson area.

A secondary focus will be support for those college campus served by sons or daughters of First Presbyterian Church regardless of the location of the college or university.

To the extent we can raise sufficient funds in our missions budget, we would like to assist in starting RUF ministries on strategic college and university campuses – centers of academic, cultural, or governmental influence, where there may be few local resources available to begin a RUF campus ministry.

III. EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

A. What is the difference between discipleship and evangelism?

For many, evangelism and discipleship are two different things. Evangelism means sharing the gospel with an unbeliever so that he or she might be saved, while discipleship means helping someone who is already a believer walk the life of faith.

Under this view, the word “evangelism” brings to mind things like handing out gospel tracts, going door-to-door in a college dorm, or creatively communicating the gospel on the streets of a foreign country, while the word “discipleship” connotes a small group Bible study, a conversation across the table with another person, or an accountability group.

In a sense though, evangelism and discipleship are not all that different. When Jesus said, “Go, and make disciples,” He meant both telling unbelievers the good news as well as helping those who already believe grow in their faith. These two activities go hand-in-hand because they are both powered by the gospel. This is illustrated by Col. 2: 6-7: “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord [*i.e.*, by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit], so walk in Him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

This is the way we are saved, the way we grow, and the way disciples are made. If we are walking with Christ to the rhythm of the gospel in our lives and talking about that with other people, we are making disciples. An unbeliever might come to understand the gospel for the first time or a believer might be reminded of the gospel and believe afresh or be encouraged in the walk of faith. Either way, we are a vessel carrying the life-changing power of the gospel and making disciples as we walk through this life.

So, we are not about *either* “evangelism” *or* “discipleship,” but rather *both* “evangelism” *and* “discipleship.” We are called to make disciples through the power of the gospel.

B. Reasons for Evangelism and Discipleship

Evangelism and discipleship are near to the heart of God. Jesus declared that he came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Following our Lord, our witness is a reflection of our vital relationship with God. Peter reminds us (1 Pet. 2:9), “you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” Peter had learned his lesson well from our Lord Jesus himself, who declared (Matt. 5:14,16), “You are the light of the world ... let your

light shine.” Prior to his ascension, Jesus clarified His heart’s desire as he gave His unambiguous last will and testament to His church: the priority to make disciples through Spirit-empowered witness (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Christian witness in the early church was spontaneous and contagious, a natural outflow of the love and passionate devotion to Jesus Christ that the believers shared in common. Their love for one another was shared, in turn, with their own surrounding communities, thus fulfilling the Lord’s “new commandment” (John 13:34,35). Gospel witness was both “taught” and “caught,” and “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

One of the first things that Jesus said to His would be followers was “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Christ not only began His earthly ministry with evangelism and discipleship, but He also ended it with the command of the Great Commission. “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:19-20). The emphasis here is that the Lord commanded us to “make disciples.”

C. The Supporting Role of Evangelism and Discipleship Ministries

As stated earlier, we believe that the church is the primary, God-ordained means for Christian witness in the world. For that reason, church planting is the primary goal of MNA. We believe the local church is the most effective evangelism and discipleship ministry available. Secondly, we have seen the effectiveness of Campus Ministry in building the Church.

Our support of other ministries will necessarily be limited. Priority will be given to effective ministries that provide unique support to the work of Church Planting or international missions. If a ministry is significant but does not meet our strategic focus, it may be considered for support by the Benevolence Budget of the Church instead of through the MNA budget.

D. Geographic Focus for Evangelism and Discipleship

We do not have a specific geographic focus for our evangelism and discipleship ministry.

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