

## **Mount Olive Presbyterian Church Mission Statement**

Called together by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Mount Olive Presbyterian Church is committed to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with all people, to nurturing Christian discipleship, and to serving the world in the name of Christ through worship, service and fellowship.

### **1. What is the congregation's vision for ministry? Additionally describe how this vision is lived out.**

Mount Olive Presbyterian Church's vision for ministry is three-pronged: sharing the good news, nurturing Christian discipleship, and serving our world. This vision remains intact even as we have undergone changes in pastoral leadership, in membership, and in our congregational demographics. Like many Reformed congregations, we are grappling with a seismic wave of changing attitudes, habits and behavior among believers, and a corresponding shift in our finances. Our challenge is to hold fast to our vision and call, while at the same time discern how to heed that call and connect with a new generation.

As a faith community, we hold dear the role of worship in our lives. We have our traditional 11 a.m. service, and for those who enjoy a smaller, less formal gathering, we have a "Morning Glory" service at 8:45. The goal for both services is the same: to gather for worship, to hear the Word read and proclaimed, to honor God with our voices in song. That sense of connectedness as a church family runs through our adult Bible studies and adult Sunday school classes, Service Circle, our ROCKs seniors group (Remarkable Older Christian Kids), choir, third Sunday fellowship luncheons (we love to eat together!) and more.

Our church takes seriously its covenant to collectively nurture our children and youth. For 20 years we ran a lively LOGOS program on Wednesday nights. It ended in 2018, largely because our children had grown up! For our college students we offer annual scholarships, and care packages in advance of spring exams.

MOPC's Footprints Preschool is in its 16<sup>th</sup> year of providing Christian nurture and early childhood development for toddlers and preschoolers throughout our community, and it continues to thrive. The level of the church's support – space, utilities and cleaning services, as well as an advisory board to provide guidance – makes Footprints the church's largest single mission.

We have a number of church members in their 90s, and we recognize that our older adults need to know that their church community loves and cherishes them. We have an active ROCKs group for our mobile seniors. Our Service Circle and Spiritual Growth, Nurture & Care Committee have taken steps to provide regular visitations to our shut-ins.

In our interim period we chose to focus our outreach efforts and resources in two general areas: Health and Wellness, and Food Insecurity. We broadly defined health and wellness for the mind, body and spirit. We have hosted gatherings for the congregation and beyond on internet and phone security, a conversation with the CEO of our local hospital, and other topics. Our Stewardship Committee hosts

guest speakers to talk about community programs – two recent dinners featured the Wayne County Council on Aging and Cry Freedom Ministries, which serves those in our community caught in human trafficking. We launched a regular walking group, and timed them to coincide with weekly Bible studies. We continue to explore possible relationships with like-minded community organizations where we could make our facilities available.

Our Food Insecurity focus builds on our passion for the local children we serve through the Back Pack Buddy program. Our church provides 40+ bags of food a week to elementary and middle school children in Mount Olive. We applied for and received two grants to help us continue funding it (the cost is approximately \$200 per week.) We continue to reach out to other churches to see if we could engage them as regular partners – the need is so great in our community. Our monthly Two Cents a Meal collection, done by our children during worship with metal buckets, is divided between Back Pack Buddies and Helping Hands Mission, a local emergency food pantry.

Finally, in our interim, we hope to develop specific outreach to a small core of young adults and young married couples who are part of our congregation, and to continue to seek ways to effectively engage and nurture the handful of children and youth we have.

All of these initiatives and more serve as conduits for a faith-filled, intergenerational, energetic congregation to serve, to connect, and to live out Christ's call on our lives. We are known as a nurturing church, a praying church.

## **2. How do you feel called to reach out to address the emerging needs of your community?**

Mount Olive is a small Eastern North Carolina town of 4,500. We are the home of Mt. Olive Pickles, Southern Bank, Hwy 55 Burgers, and the University of Mount Olive (UMO). We have much to be proud of. We also have much that breaks our hearts. Between 60-70% percent of our local middle and elementary school students are considered economically disadvantaged - hence, our focus on the Back Pack Buddy program.

We led the way over the years with Habitat for Humanity. Most recently, we worked with a collection of local churches to build two more houses back to back in 2018. Our congregation supported Habitat financially as well as with a team of volunteers to help build, and we look forward to the next Mount Olive Habitat build next year. Additionally, we partner with UMO and other churches to assist incoming freshmen international students by collecting bedding and personal care kits for new arrivals each fall.

We host Cub Scout Pack 34 (a relationship that stretches back over 50 years) and Girl Scout Troop 389 that serves over 60 girls on our campus. We host GED classes coordinated through Wayne Community College. We continue to seek ways to make our campus available for community services and programs.

Our community is diverse, and poor. We recognize the opportunity to reach out to folks who do not look like us and invite them into our fellowship, and/or to help them establish their own Presbyterian

congregations. We have a sizeable Haitian population in Mount Olive, and we see potential for outreach under the guidance and experience of our current temporary stated supply, Elder John Winings.

### **3. How will this position help you to reach your vision and mission goals?**

Prior to this interim period, we were led by a beloved minister who provided us with stable, loving leadership for 15 years until his retirement. The self-examination period forced us to take a hard look at the realities of our present and future. Declining membership through death, loss to other churches, and an aging congregation with more fixed incomes have all made a resulting impact on our finances. Where we had once given liberally as a congregation to a variety of local and denominational missions through the work of our Outreach, Mission and Stewardship Committee and monthly special offerings, we were forced to limit what we asked of our congregation. We trimmed our expenses. We chose to focus our outreach efforts to the two that seemed logical and consistent with our calling: Food Insecurity and Health & Wellness. And we realized our finances no longer allowed us to afford a full-time minister; that we would have to seek a part-time installed pastor. We have a current part-time arrangement with our temporary stated supply who is with us until we find our permanent pastor. Through this we are exploring how a part-time arrangement works moving forward. We have come to grips with the idea that smaller does not mean less effective, less successful or less energetic, that as a congregation we can live into our calling no matter our size. We remain committed to growing our congregation, to be sure. But we understand size is not our vision or calling. If we focus on God's call to service, He will provide what we need.

Our new pastor, then, will need to shepherd us as the congregation we are – older, smaller, but no less passionate, and guide us to become the congregation we are called to be. We are in transition, to be sure. An installed pastor will provide consistency of leadership for an active session and committees, for our congregation in worship, and for our missions.

### **4. Provide a description of the characteristics needed by the person who is open to being called to this congregation.**

In the LOGOS program, we sought to call those “who love God, love children and had gifts to share.” We would like to modify that a bit. We want to call a pastor “who loves God, loves the people of God, and has gifts to share.” We love our children and families, our older adults, our young adults and couples, and those in our community. We seek a pastor who has that same passion, with a sense of humor, flexibility, and an ample dose of love. We seek a pastor with a gift for preaching and a love of music, and one who is willing to provide pastoral care, particularly among our older adults. We seek a pastor who can help us further discern our callings and lead us forward.

### **5. For what specific tasks, assignments and program areas will this person have responsibility?**

- Preaching the Word with authority and spirit in two Sunday services
- Pastoral care and visits

- Moderating session and guiding elders and committees in their work
- Leading the sacraments
- Leading chapel for Footprints Preschool
- Engagement in other church programs as appropriate and practical