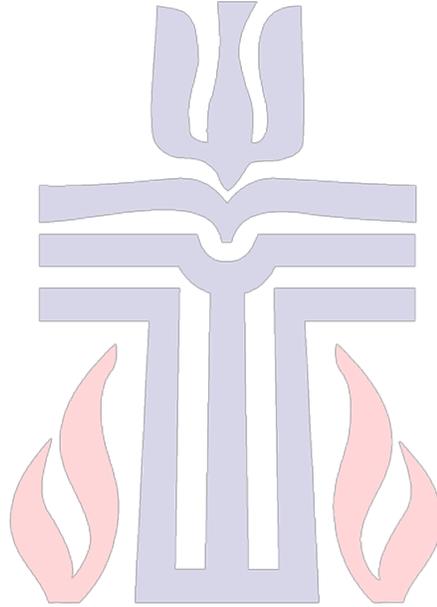


Plan for Union and Unity



**Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church
and
The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell**

Adopted by the Congregations of Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church and The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell at Congregational Meetings held on XXXXXXXXX

A Plan for Union and Unity

A PLAN OF UNION: BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

In 2015, the congregations of Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church (PPC) and the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell (FPC), independently of each other, utilized the New Beginnings Congregational Assessment Service to discern future ministry possibilities. The New Beginnings journey led each of these congregations to entirely different recommendations, as outlined below. These recommendations when taken together, however, provide a mutual opportunity for new life and faithfully following where God is leading:

For PPC, the picture that arose from the New Beginnings process was of a community with a strong love of the creative, along with the awareness that the arts-centered programs of the church are often utilized by God in transforming and edifying humanity. At the same time, a very clear picture emerged through the process showing that the membership, worship attendance, and financial resources at PPC have been declining for some time, and have reached a crisis level. It is estimated that there are enough resources to support a congregation at that location for only a few more months. The recommendation from the church body, then, was to seek another congregation with which to merge, and to seek ways of faithfully using the resource of the church property within the merged congregation – either for continued services and ministries of some kind, or to use the property as a revenue generator through usage fees by outside entities or by selling the property in part or in whole.

For FPC, the recommendation arising out of New Beginnings was something of a hybrid – to “stay as we are” to the extent that there are many things we do well to promote discipleship, but we also need to “redefine our mission” by choosing to be a more discipleship-oriented congregation. The recommendations centered around four areas:

1. **Outreach to the local community.** FPC should present itself to the local community as the role model of a loving, service-oriented church.
2. **Nurturing the congregation.** Fellowship is key.
3. **Youth.** Our children are the future of the Church, wherever they may grow up and settle.
4. **Communication.** The success of whatever we choose to do going forward depends on our ability to get the word out.

So, with one congregation facing the reality of having to close its doors and release its pastor, and the other congregation looking to expand its ministry in the area, the idea of FPC adopting PPC became a real possibility.

The proposal is for FPC to adopt PPC, and bring on Rev. Todd Shumpert to work in the area of Community Arts and Advocacy – a newly created position designed to engage both the passions and pains of the neighbors and neighborhoods beyond the church. This adoption fits well with both congregations' New Beginnings recommendation: for PPC, it provides a church with which to unite and a relationship with its current pastor to continue; for FPC, it provides leadership in the specific area of Outreach to the local community by providing pastoral leadership in the form of a new staff person.

Having said that, the reality is that FPC cannot afford to bring another staff person on board without additional financial resources. To fund this position, a portion or all of the facility presently at PPC will need to be sold. Until the sale is effected, worship and other ministry opportunities can continue at the Pleasantdale campus, with the intentional effort to engage in activities which serve to unite the two congregations. The Community Arts and Advocacy position would be a temporary pastoral relationship, funded for a two-year period from the proceeds of that sale. FPC is prepared to cover the compensation of Rev. Shumpert until the sale is effected, at which time the funds which have been used to cover Rev. Shumpert's compensation would be reimbursed. The additional funds would become the assets of the united congregation, with a portion being designated for the Presbytery of Newark.

A Plan for Union and Unity

The goal of this union is to ensure and provide effective community-focused congregational ministry in this part of Newark Presbytery for many years to come, and said union not only addresses the emerging reality at PPC, but provides leadership for FPC as well.

Comments, concerns, and questions about the Plan for Union may also be addressed to the respective Clerks of Session, Moderators, or the Chairperson of the Committee on Ministry, Director of Presbytery Ministry, and Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Newark.

Contact Information:

Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church

- Clerk of Session: Cathy Franco
- Moderator of Session: Todd Shumpert

First Presbyterian Church

- Clerk of Session: Ruling Elder Elizabeth Resch
- Moderator of Session: Rick Sommers

Chairperson, Committee on Ministry: Ruth Boling

Stated Clerk, Newark Presbytery: Warren McNeil (973.429.2500)

Director of Presbytery Ministry, Newark Presbytery: Barbara Smith (973.953.6700)

A Plan for Union and Unity

HISTORY

The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell and Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church are components of the Church universal, holding in common their profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and commitment to live in fellowship under Christ's rule. [Book of Order G-4.0101]

Both the Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church and the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell have rich histories of serving their communities with love and compassion.

In 1878, the Pleasant Valley German Presbyterian Church was organized with the cornerstone of its church edifice placed later that same year. In the 138 years that have followed, what is now known as the Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church has held true to its roots of diversity and inclusivity.

The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell has been a vital presence in its community throughout its 232 years of ministry. From its very beginnings it has served God with intelligence, imagination, and love. FPC continues to serve God in new and ever-growing ways.

The union of the Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church and the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell will continue to honor God as we seek to serve the West Essex County area of Newark Presbytery as a united congregation.

RATIONALE FOR THE PLAN OF UNION

- The union of FPC and PPC would help both congregations:
 - Express our oneness in Christ
 - Exercise good stewardship of our resources
 - Expand our ministry impact in the community
 - Embrace our emerging realities
 - Energize our congregation for growth
- Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church is experiencing a decline in membership and attendance at worship. The capacity of the current Pleasantdale congregation is not sufficient to continue ministry at their site.
- The plan provides a cooperative model that can be used by other churches in the Presbytery that are struggling with survival issues.
- The proposal arises not simply out of the financial crisis in which Pleasantdale finds itself, but also from the New Beginnings journey which the respective congregations recently experienced.

A Plan for Union and Unity

THE PLAN OF UNION

The session and congregation of the Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church and the session and congregation of the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell seek to join in union.

The Plan for Union between the Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church and the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell will encompass, but would not be limited to, the following provisions and affirmations:

1. Name:
 - a. The Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church will dissolve, and be adopted by the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell. The name of the newly formed congregation will continue to be *The First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell*.
 - b. The Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church's site location name will be referred to as *First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell – Pleasantdale Campus*.
2. Leadership:
 - a. Pastor:
 - i. Dr. Richard Sommers will continue to serve the congregation as Pastor/Head of Staff.
 - ii. Rev. Don Brown will continue to serve the congregation as Associate Pastor of Adult Education, Pastoral Care, and Membership Development
 - iii. Rev. Todd Shumpert will serve the congregation in the area of Community Arts and Advocacy. The position description is in the process of being developed.
 - b. Session:
 - i. Until sold, the Pleasantdale campus will remain a ministry site under the leadership of one session comprised of all Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church session members (4) and First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell session members (21).
 - ii. All session members will rotate off the session according to their class. While effort will be made to continue to have members of PPC serve as elders in the future, there will be no provision which would require new classes to contain former Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church members.
 - c. Deacons:
 - i. The deacons in active service at the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell (24 members) would constitute one Board of Deacons, there being no such board currently at Pleasantdale.
 - ii. All deacons will rotate off the board of deacons according to their class. While effort will be made to continue to have members of PPC serve as deacons in the future, there will be no provision which would require new classes to contain former Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church members.
3. Location: The Pleasantdale Presbyterian Church (47 Pleasant Valley Way, West Orange, NJ 07052) and the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell (326 Bloomfield Ave. Caldwell, NJ 07006) will constitute one church in two locations under the leadership of one session with one vision, one common staff, and one consolidated budget.
4. All property, assets, and liabilities of the PPC and FPC will become the property, assets, and liabilities of the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell. The united congregation has the right to sell all or part of the West Orange campus at its discretion. PPC consists of the main Church Building which includes the Sanctuary, and the Parish House. Currently, the main Church building and Sanctuary are utilized for Sunday Worship Services and other Church activities. The 2nd floor of the Parish House is utilized by the Center for Spiritual Living of North Jersey, and other community groups use the lower floor. Based on the combined budget, the adoption of PPC and assuming the compensation of Rev. Shumpert will require selling a portion or all of the Pleasantdale property.

A Plan for Union and Unity

Until the sale of the property is complete, Rev. Shumpert's compensation would be covered by designated funds of FPC. Said funds would be reimbursed to the designated funds upon completion of the sale.

5. Finances:

- a. All income from the combined congregations will go to support one united budget.
- b. All expenses will be paid from one united budget.