

# Living Love Outwardly: A New Vision for Mission and Community Partnership at Church of the Redeemer

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## 1. Redefining Mission

### ***Mission = Being Love in the World Around Us***

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Church of the Redeemer has long desired to be a church reaching beyond our walls and making an impact in the world around us. Based on the listening session data we have received, that desire continues today. We want to be reaching folks in the broader community with the love of God. The Church of the Redeemer community has expressed a desire for a revitalization, redefining, and reengagement of mission. There is a shared interest in focusing our efforts in ways that are clear, easily communicated to others, and connected to the opportunities available to us.

Church of the Redeemer is reimagining “mission” not as a separate entity or committee, but as a central value lived out across all ministries. This reimagining is based on the definition of the mission of the church as defined by the Catechism in The Book of Common Prayer and our Baptismal Covenant. Every area of church life is an expression of mission—merely approached differently.

### ***Ministry of Service, Justice, & Community***

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Rather than labeling one area of ministry as “Mission/Outreach,” we propose a more intentional framing: Ministry of Service, Justice, & Community.

Why this shift:

- We desire language that reflects how we live love outwardly.
- Our calling is to join with neighbors, organizations, and communities in partnerships that reflect God’s love.
- Our work includes:
  1. Fostering community
  2. Meeting human needs
  3. Transforming unjust systems
  4. Opposing violence and exclusion
  5. Working for peace and reconciliation

## 2. Core Principles

### ***Mutuality Over Superiority***

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All engagement with others is an invitation to mutuality, never an assertion of superiority.

### ***Power of Presence***

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Central to our work is deep presence in our community– visibility, proximity, and living God’s love in everyday places.

Example: Exploring Church of the Redeemer’s visible and intentional presence in places like Hyde Park Square, showing up where people gather but the church currently has no presence.

### ***Having a Focus Area***

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Our realized focus area, based on the data received across our listening sessions, suggests that Church of the Redeemer should prioritize support to **systemically excluded youth**.

Systemically Excluded Youth includes youth ages 13-18 years old who face barriers to housing, belonging, safety, or opportunity because of identity, income, or circumstance. These youth are not a problem to fix, but partners in the transformation we all seek. At Church of the Redeemer, we will commit to walking alongside these young neighbors with humility and hope, creating spaces where stories are honored, gifts are shared, and healing flows in both directions. Their flourishing is bound up in our own.

- The data leans toward 13-18-year-olds as the most natural and immediate population for Church of the Redeemer to engage—not because they are the only ones in need, but because:
  - The relationships are already budding (eg. CoR After School in partnership with Clark Montessori).
  - The church has the location, energy, and community trust to make a meaningful impact.
  - This is a pivotal age for identity formation, belonging, and support.
- This framing reflects key insights from the listening sessions, including:
  - Youth voicing the need for welcoming, safe spaces where they can be themselves and build trust.

- Neighborhood maps highlighting gaps in inclusive gathering places, especially for younger and under-resourced residents.
- Neighborhood maps also highlighting several schools serving teen populations.
- Clarifying the Role of the Focus Area
  - The prioritization of systemically excluded youth is not a limitation—it is a **clarifying center**.
  - It gives direction to our primary resources and energy while still allowing for **responsive engagement with other meaningful service opportunities**.
  - What this means:
    - **Most funding, storytelling, and strategic energy** from the Ministry of Service, Justice, and Community will center around partners and initiatives that serve systemically excluded youth.
    - **Other service opportunities**—such as food insecurity work, community clean-ups, or crisis responses—**are still valued and encouraged**—just not our main priority.
      - These may be supported as:
        - Individual or seasonal volunteer opportunities
        - One-time financial contributions (through Community Funding guidelines)
        - Entry points for broader parish engagement
- We trust that:
  - **Our focus area anchors us**, ensuring depth and sustained impact.
  - **Our flexibility honors the Spirit's movement**, responding to emerging needs and individual callings.

### 3. Defining Partnership

Not every relationship is a “mission partner.” We redefine a partner as:

***A sacred relationship rooted in mutual purpose and work, which may or may not be focused on service, justice, or community.***

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- Types of Partnerships:
  - Discipleship Partner (e.g., learning organizations, education opportunities)
  - Pastoral Care Partner (e.g., ERS, ASL, counseling centers)

- Worship Partner (e.g., arts organizations, combined church services or choir events)

These partnerships are respected equally regardless of their alignment with service/justice goals. They may overlap with the Ministry of Service, Justice, & Community—when they do, coordination will occur, but ownership remains with the originating ministry.

Example:

Our Discipleship Ministry might partner with Ignite Peace to offer immigration advocacy education. If this presents a service opportunity, our Ministry of Service, Justice, & Community would engage supportively, but the primary partnership remains educational as a Discipleship Partner.

#### **4. Opportunities vs. Partners**

Not all relationships will evolve into formal partnerships. Some are better defined as service opportunities:

***Moments where Church of the Redeemer joins an organization for a specific act of service, without aligning on broader ministry focus or forming an ongoing partnership.***

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- Example: Freestore Foodbank
  - Important, valuable service to our parishioners.
  - Current engagement is limited to volunteer service, not a focused direction of our community ministry.
  - ***Freestore Foodbank should be considered a service opportunity, not a ministry partner.***

#### **5. Political Engagement as Mission**

A growing part of Church of the Redeemer's mission identity is political engagement grounded in love and justice.

Standing up for the dignity and respect of every human being is a form of being love in the world around us. Further work will shape Church of the Redeemer's role in political advocacy as a natural extension of its commitment to service, justice, and community.

## 6. Structural Alignment: Overhauling Boards, Committees, and Staffing Titles

To reflect this new vision, the existing Mission Board and Mission Funding Committee would be restructured, and the staff member dedicated to these areas of ministry would also have a title that reflects the nature of our work better.

- Proposed Names and Functions:
  - **Service, Justice, & Community Board**
    - Guides the church's direction and discernment around living love outwardly.
    - Helps identify and maintain focus areas, priorities, and long-term partnerships.
    - Supports parishioners in their desired areas of service by providing a platform for sharing their work, involvement, and presenting service opportunities to the wider parish.
    - Emphasizes a model that is **Church of the Redeemer affirmed, Community led**—affirming the autonomy and leadership of those doing the work with the community organization.
  - **Community Funding Committee**
    - Manages financial support for opportunities and partners aligned with Church of the Redeemer's focus area and priorities.
    - Maintains flexibility to respond to one-off or acute needs brought to the church's attention.
    - Collaborates with the Board to create and manage the budget for Service, Justice, and Community work.
    - Reports regularly to the Board and congregation to communicate funding decisions and community impact.
  - **Minister for Community Engagement**
    - Develop and strengthen partnerships with local schools, non-profits, and community organizations.
    - Lead Church of the Redeemer's neighborhood outreach initiatives, including seasonal events, involvement with community-wide initiatives, and service projects.
    - Support parish-wide discernment around Church of the Redeemer's evolving role in the community, including integrating findings from recent listening processes.
    - Collaborate with clergy and staff to align community engagement with Church of the Redeemer's mission, vision, and values.
    - Represent Church of the Redeemer in local coalitions and ecumenical partnerships.

## 7. Sharing the Story

***We must tell our story clearly and often - inside and outside of our walls. Our data is showing that when people say, "we're not doing anything," they often mean, "I don't know what's happening."***

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Goals:

- Regular updates about:
  - What organizations we partner with.
  - What opportunities exist for engagement.
  - How funds are being used and where.
- Celebrate and elevate the stories of love lived outwardly.
- This requires direct sharing within the Board and Committee to the Staff Liaison and Communications...
  - Clear direction and ownership of sharing the information needs to be determined by all parties for the sharing to happen effectively by communications.
    - This can be done by anyone - the staff liaison, board leaders/members, or funding committee members. Someone must clearly state they are owning that specific role as the opportunity arises for story sharing to occur.

### **Conclusion**

This vision is not just about redefining terms. It's about re-centering Church of the Redeemer's identity as a church that lives love outwardly—with purpose, clarity, and shared accountability. Together, we will continue to shape a church that joins hands with the world in service, justice, and community—always reflecting the love of God.