

# Our Hope for the World


Westminster Presbyterian Church




## Background

This statement of Westminster Presbyterian Church's "Hope for the World" responds to Adult Ed/Social Justice Forum speaker Rev. Dr. Rebecca Todd Peters\*, who challenged us to **move beyond studying the ever-changing economic and social world and to envision what we want that world to be and then to act on that vision.**

\*Dr. Peters is an Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Elon University, an ordained Presbyterian Teaching Elder and a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.




The Westminster Session called for a congregation-wide study and dialogue to develop a brief statement of our shared vision for the world. **This vision would be an expression of our understanding of God's love, which is our source of hope for the world.** It would engage the imagination, stimulate the intellect and energize the members of Westminster Presbyterian Church to work to bring that vision to fruition. This is not a revision of the Westminster Mission Statement, which says what the church is to be, but a statement about how we want the world to be .



**A Task Force was appointed** by Tim Hart-Andersen as Moderator of the Session to create a statement that is grounded in scripture and Reformed tradition and that describes what our congregation thinks the world would look like if it were ordered on the basis of God's love and justice.

*The Task Force followed the pattern often used for congregation-wide studies. They first engaged with and listened to a broad segment of the members of the congregation. They met with groups such as the session and the deacons, the Senior High youth group and The Great Over Fifty (TGOF), and they invited anyone who was interested to give input to a listening session. They asked people what they thought the world would look like if it were ordered on the basis of God's love and justice. The Task Force used the combined responses to identify characteristics that have been woven together into a statement about our hope for the world. As a result of this listening process, this statement uniquely represents Westminster.*



The Task Force felt called out of our Reformed confessional tradition to speak carefully and specifically to our time and place, to speak about how the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to work toward a new and better world. They examined scripture and the confessions of the PC(USA) and other recent public statements from faith bodies. They reflected on how the Gospel of Jesus Christ might speak to this time and place.



At a recent PCUSA Environmental Justice conference, William P. Brown of Columbia Theological Seminary reflected,

*“How do we find hope amid the (world’s) data of despair and the lack of progress? We don’t. Hope finds us. Hope is a gift of God that offers itself when the stories and lessons of our faith are read anew for just such a time as this. Hope is an endowed conviction, not a cheery disposition. Instead of meekly smiling in the face of bad news, ‘hoping’ for the best as the optimist does, hope laughs at adversity and dares to imagine God’s vision of justice and peace for the world, of restoration for creation, even if such imagining flies in the face of all that we see around us. Hope is the gift of resolve against the odds. ‘Hope that is seen is not hope’ (Rom 8:24).”*

Our results >>>

Five characteristics of the world we hope for were identified out of all the material gathered by the Task Force.

Westminster's hope is for a  
**just, loving, joyful, sustainable, peaceful**  
community  
(in no particular order).

Key elements that reflect these characteristics were identified along with biblical passages that speak to each element of the community for which we hope and toward which we commit ourselves to work.



## *Vision Statement: JUST*

### **We envision a just community.**

Justice is God's abundant love made active in the world. We believe that all people are created in God's image. Therefore we stand with those who suffer and strive for a just world in which all people thrive in every aspect of life.

A just community:

- Acts courageously to transform social systems and relationships among people.
- Challenges inequalities that deny the fullness of life to some.
- Practices love of neighbors and confronts hatred and bigotry.

*Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 16:20; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:35-40;  
John 10:10*

## *Vision Statement:* LOVING

### **We envision a loving community.**

God's two great commandments to us are to love God with all our heart, soul and mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We believe that God has created the peoples of the world to be one universal family.

A loving community:

- Honors the loving aspirations of all people of all religious faiths.
- Practices hospitality toward friend, stranger and enemy alike.
- Seeks to reconcile people divided from one another.

*Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Matthew 22:36-40; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; 1 John 4:7-12*

## *Vision Statement: JOYFUL*

### **We envision a joyful community.**

God rejoices when human beings live together in harmony. We find joy in worshiping God and in celebrating the deep connections within the human family.

A joyful community:

- Calls people together, embracing differences and affirming commonalities.
- Rejoices and finds hope in the change that comes with God's ongoing creation and revelation.
- Seeks and gives thanks for the well-being of all.

*Psalms 16:1,2,11; 66:1-4; 95:1-5; Isaiah 35:8,10; John 16:16-24; Galatians 5:22-23*

## *Vision Statement: SUSTAINABLE*

### **We envision a sustainable community.**

God created the world good and calls humans to be stewards of creation. We exercise that responsibility by showing care for natural, human and economic resources, and living as mutual partners in the global community.

A sustainable community:

- Uses resources responsibly and fairly.
- Lives in ways that allow future generations to flourish.
- Respects and works to preserve the diversity of creation.

*Genesis 1:26-31, 2:7-25; Psalm 8; Psalm 24:1; Romans 8:18-25; 2 Corinthians 8:13-14; Colossians 1:13-20*

## *Vision Statement:* PEACEFUL

### **We envision a peaceful community.**

Peace is a gift of God entrusted to the human community. We are called as peacemakers to love our enemies, to pursue justice, to love kindness and to grant mercy.

A peaceful community:

- Seeks freedom from discrimination, fear and tyranny for all people.
- Resolves conflict through empathy, dialogue and forgiveness.
- Treasures opportunities for prayer and reflection.

*John 14:27; Hebrews 12:14; Colossians 3:15; Matthew 5:9; Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 23:1-3*

Out of these statements we created a visual that describes an earth circumscribed by these five characteristics. Think of it as a rubber-band ball—tightly wound together >>>



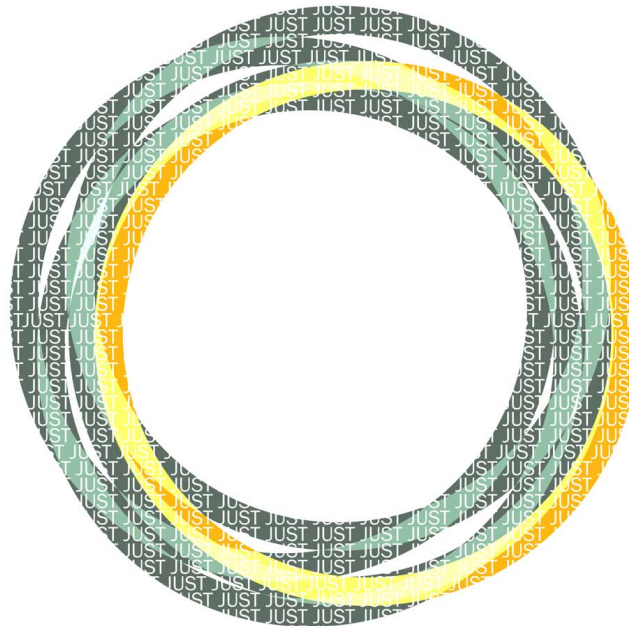
And then we pulled it apart >>>



# just

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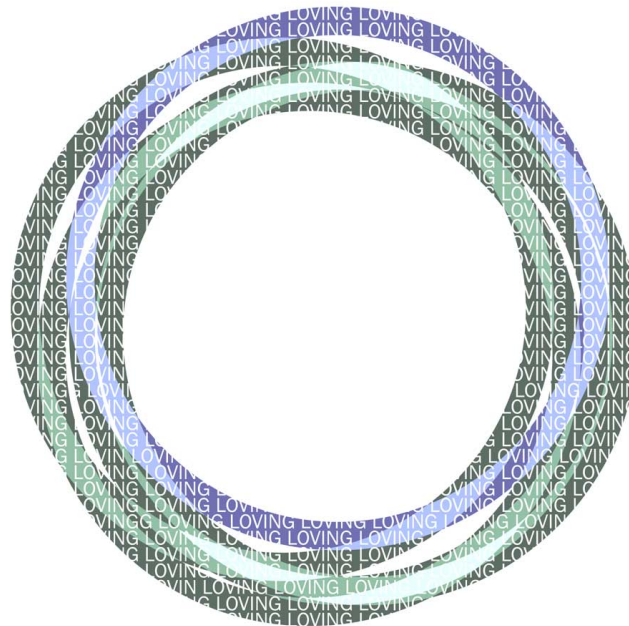
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# loving

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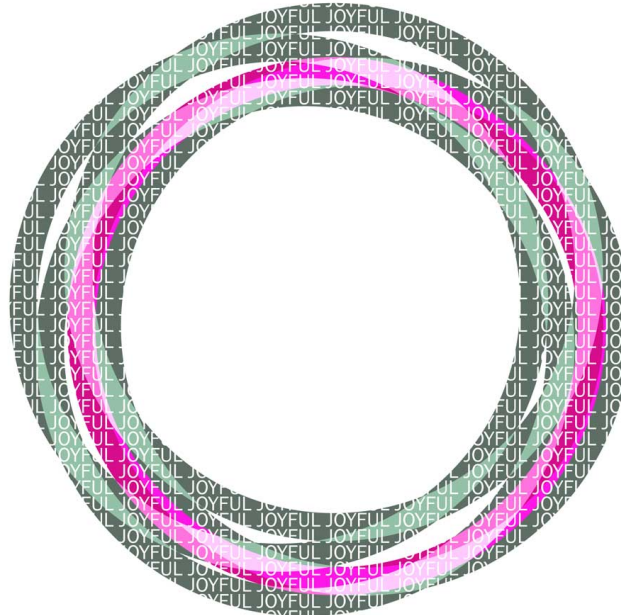


# joyful

God rejoices when human beings live together in harmony. We find joy in worshipping God and in celebrating the deep connections within the human family.

**A joyful community:** Calls people together, embracing differences and affirming commonalities | Rejoices and finds hope in the change that comes with God's ongoing creation and revelation | Seeks and gives thanks for the well-being of all

*Psalms 16:1,2,11; 66:1-4; 95:1-5; Isaiah 35:8,10; John 16:16-24; Galatians 5:22-23*



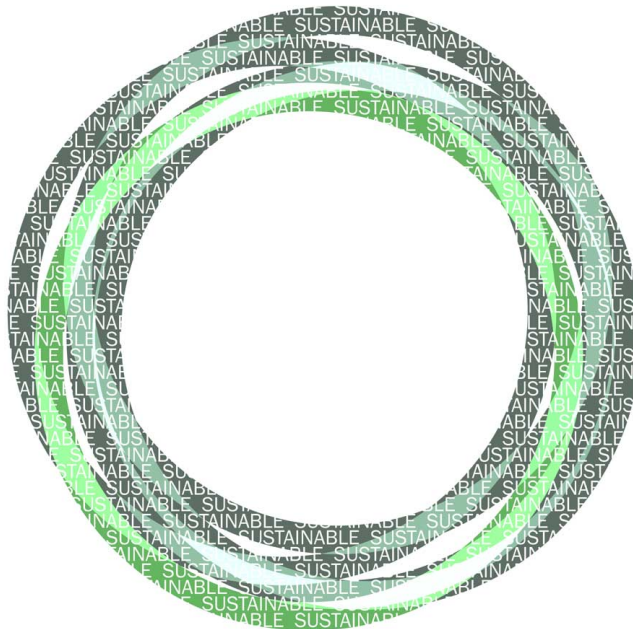
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# sustainable

God created the world good and calls humans to be stewards of creation. We exercise that responsibility by showing care for natural, human and economic resources, and living as mutual partners in the global community. A **sustainable community**: Uses resources responsibly and fairly | Lives in ways that allow future generations to flourish | Respects and works to preserve the diversity of creation.

*Genesis 1:26-31, 2:7-25; Psalm 8; Psalm 24:1; Romans 8:18-252 Corinthians 8:13-14; Colossians 1:13-20*



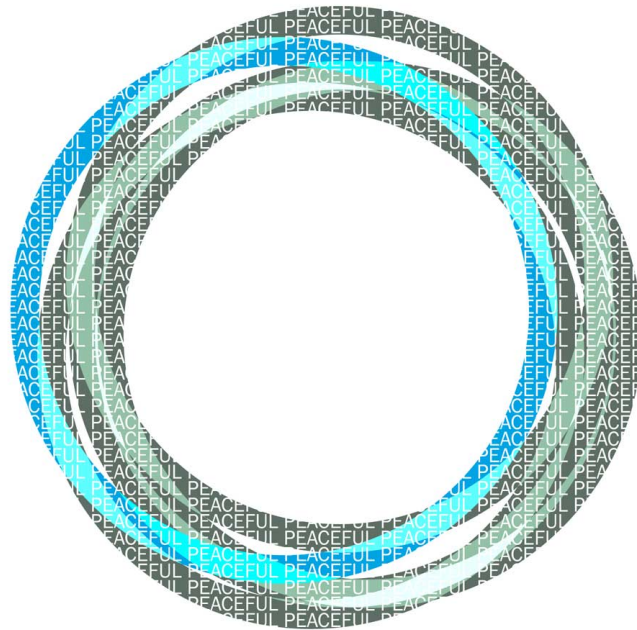
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# peaceful

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just

joyful

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peaceful



Moving from *hope* to *action* >>>



It is our intent that we, as a community of God's faithful, will actively ***live into this Hope***. Given the pressures we encounter every day in the communities in which we live, work and worship, words without action are only good intentions. At a minimum, the Task Force encourages Westminster's Session, and the congregation at large, to use this Vision to:

- ***Declare ourselves as a congregation of hope***. Every day we have the opportunity to influence perspectives, dialogue, and action in the communities in which we live and work.
- ***Shape education and programming within the church***. Opportunities abound across the program year to more thoroughly explore these themes and their implications for our lives as followers of Christ.
- ***Inspire and inform our worship***. Our primary purpose as a congregation is to worship and glorify God. The more diligently we work toward the world that God intends, the more we glorify God.
- ***Direct our mission giving and action***. Perhaps the most tangible manifestation of living into this Hope is how we direct the time and talents of our congregation.



This *Hope For Our Future* uniquely reflects the perspectives and aspirations of the Westminster family as of 2011. Our hopes for the world, however, cannot be static — they must evolve as the conditions of our time and place evolve. As a result, care must be given to periodically revisit and refresh this vision in future years.

### ***Vision Task Force***

Doug Mitchell, Pastor Liaison

Gretchen Musicant, Co-chair

Pete Cochrane, Co-chair

Louis Davis

Fred Dietrich

Eugene Fotso

Shaun Jennings

Tim Jones

Meghan Paul-Cook