



BUILDING

*Our congregation turned out to prepare
Roycott House for our refugee family*

GOING FORWARD: OUR STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

SUBSECTIONS

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METHODOLOGY

This report is built on a foundation laid by our predecessor committee, Mission Study Committee 1. Combined with our work, the total effort was months of interviewing, a survey, multiple listening sessions, digging into records and then searching for meaning in what we found. Our report is not based on meditating about what we thought we knew.

We worked to understand what the research revealed about ourselves, the troubled times we live in, our church, where we live and what following Jesus means in the context of that. We argued (peaceably), laughed and even turned to Artificial Intelligence to help us sort through piles of comments.

A mission study committee's purpose, after all, is to *study*, and from that discern a church's mission and write a report about it. Our first recommendation is that we should do this periodically. We found what Dorothy discovered 125 years ago on her trip to Oz: Our mission in following Jesus begins at home in Willow Glen, where our first stones were laid 79 years ago.

We do not believe Jesus leads us back to 1946, to be a museum. Rather, we believe we are being led into the future, to be a congregation of believers that speaks to today's people in words and actions meaningful in today's situation, speaking a truth that's eternal: Jesus calls us to do good in the world we live in.

Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time ...

Habakkuk 2:2-3a (NRSVUE)

The recommendations we make in this section are in accordance with the principles listed in our report summary on **Page 6**:

- Reorganizing our structure to adequately meet our operational, spiritual, congregational and mission needs without overworking our volunteers,
- Clearly communicating our mission and vision among ourselves and the broader community, and
- Working to increase resources including through partnerships with other entities where current resources are inadequate.

Each of these principles contributes to Stone Church being a welcoming place of learning and inspiration to our members and a good neighbor in the community of Willow Glen. What we learned about ourselves in this study gave our committee confidence not only that our congregation is up to this task but is eager to get on with it.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Reason / Goal		Time frame
Hire 1 full-time ordained pastor / head of staff	Size of congregation		Within 18 months
Create ¾ time church admin position	Office manager works overtime		
Create ¼ time admin assistant position			
Employ 2 part-time family ministry personnel	Build family ministry, community connection		
Employ 1 nursery worker	Build family ministry, community connection		
Create 1 part-time communications manager	Need for consistent messaging, community connection		
Re-orient budget process & pledging	Financial sustainability, mission planning		
Move from committee to team system	Engage congregation, streamline structure, remove silos		
Formalize monthly social events	Family ministry, engage congregation		
Willow Glen/San Jose community event presence	Community connection		
Move Sunday start time later	Family ministry, community connection		
Form Mission Study implementation team	Ensure action on recommendations		Within 36 months
Investigate contract service for technology management or hire part-timer	Improve livestreaming, volunteer overload, community connection		
Investigate contract service for facilities management or hire part-timer	Volunteer overload		
Refresh hospitality / first impression practices	Community connection		
Pursue grant funding for community needs	Community connection / financial sustainability		
Build formal partnerships with schools	Family ministry, community connection		
Investigate free / rental building use for public gatherings	Community connection		
Re-imagine use of paper / digital communication	Financial sustainability, environment, community connection		
Institute endowment campaign	Financial sustainability		
Do another mission study in 7 years	Mission planning, financial sustainability		

REBUILDING CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Through every method and at every opportunity they had to communicate with us, our members told us about their concerns about the aging of our congregation and the absence of children and young families in our midst.

Rebuilding what was lost will require staff, curriculum and community-building with families that show our commitment to this ministry and communicate its availability. These steps represent not only a renewal of programming but also a cultural investment in families as central to the present and future vitality of Stone Church.

We recommend that Stone Church employ a part-time Family Ministry Coordinator whose role would be complemented by a Children's Program Coordinator, with the two positions working collaboratively. The Family Ministry Coordinator would serve at 20 hours per week, while the Children's Program Coordinator would work 15 hours per week to ensure broad oversight and direct support for programming that nurtures spiritual growth in children and families. We should continue to employ a nursery worker to ensure that we continue to welcome the youngest of children and their families.

Revitalizing Sunday School is a top priority, with a focus on consistent curriculum and a reliable volunteer base to offer engaging and theologically grounded experiences for children. Children and youth should be regularly included in worship leadership, reinforcing their full membership in the body of Christ and offering them meaningful ways to contribute.

We should also explore weekday options for community-building among families, such as shared meals, family nights, or parenting support groups. These gatherings can foster belonging and connection beyond Sunday morning.



YOUTH SUNDAY

*In recent years, we've
had one each spring*

RECONNECTING WITH OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Stone Church should be a visible and welcoming presence in the community — a neighborhood hub — through hosting events that introduce more people to our church and its lovely facilities. Through our intention, warmth, and presence, we can demonstrate that our church is not only part of the neighborhood but deeply invested in its flourishing.

This role can include hosting or co-hosting public interest speaker series, or being a forum for civic and social issue discussions such as housing policy, policing, and community well-being. Over time, these gatherings could shape Stone Church into a recognized hub for ethical discourse and justice-seeking, inviting both members and neighbors to explore faith and public life together.

Stone Church is well-positioned to build formal partnerships with local schools by supporting initiatives such as hygiene kit drives and volunteer reading programs. These partnerships would allow the congregation to engage directly with the needs of students and families in the surrounding community.



STREAMLINING STRUCTURE

At the structural level, we recommend revamping the committee system to create fewer, more agile teams that have clearly defined responsibilities and the freedom to act. This simplification can make leadership more approachable, reduce burnout, and empower action.

Rather than numerous small committees that recruit members, members would be asked to join larger teams whose responsibilities match their interests, helping to form a culture where participation flows from joy and purpose rather than obligation. Teams would elect their own leaders based on members' discerned strengths.

Elders would serve on teams of their choice and be liaisons to the Session, not default committee chairs/managers as they do today. This structure affirms the Reformed understanding of shared leadership and enables people to lead from a place of passion and capacity rather than obligation or hierarchy. A sample of how this restructuring might look is in **Appendix D, Page 77**.

To ensure broader participation, the church should develop clear and accessible pathways to leadership for new and existing members. This means naming and nurturing gifts, offering invitations that align with people's passions, and supporting new leaders as they find their place. Pairing newer participants with experienced mentors can also help build confidence and continuity.

All ministries and programs that identify with Stone Church must align with our agreed-upon mission and vision to ensure integrity, consistency, and collective purpose across the church.

In the church office, we currently employ a part-time office manager assisted by volunteers. Nevertheless, the workload of that position requires working beyond hours specified on a daily basis. Based on our study, the committee recommends that a three-quarter time office administrator position and a one-quarter time administrative assistant position be created to provide paid time to cover the tasks required.

DEEPENING WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Stone Church has long valued worship that is both theologically rich and artistically excellent. Moving forward, there is an invitation to expand and deepen our worship and spiritual practice in ways that more fully engage the congregation and reflect its diversity. Collectively, the efforts described here reflect a commitment to worship and spirituality that are rooted in tradition, open to the Spirit, and responsive to the needs and voices of the whole community.

The choir is beloved and central to Stone Church's worship identity. Nevertheless, it reflects the aging of the congregation, and its sustainability requires expanded participation. This might be achieved by utilizing it in more creative ways that enhance the emotional connectivity of the service. This could include experimenting with placement, song style, or collaboration with other musical expressions. The goal is to make choir participation more attractive to younger generations who might be eager to sing in a choir that is vibrant, flexible, and open to new expressions of worship.



PSALTERY AND HARP
*... and pipa and piano
and flute and clarinet*

Our Taizé services, marked by quiet reflection, simple chant, and candlelight, provide space for spiritual renewal and connection with God in a different rhythm than traditional services. They consistently draw an average of 25 participants, some of whom don't attend Stone Church for any other reason. As Karl Rahner wrote, "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist at all." In a time of cultural change and spiritual hunger, contemplative practices offer a significant opportunity to deepen connections, extend welcome, and consider how this entry point might serve as a doorway into broader engagement with the church community.

The church must continue to prioritize including children and youth in the worship service itself by offering leadership roles such as scripture reading, prayer, music, and dramatic presentation. Doing so not only honors their presence as full members of the community but also strengthens the intergenerational nature of our worship life. This commitment also raises a practical question about the start time of worship. Consistent feedback from youth and college-aged members indicates that 9:30 a.m. is too early for them and makes inviting peers and friends more difficult.

An important question for continued exploration is how Stone Church might create small groups that are spontaneous, inclusive, and welcoming of new voices. Many of the church's current small groups appear to be closed, which is appropriate for certain kinds of long-term spiritual friendships. But open, flexible groups like those convened during our listening sessions for this report, or the women's retreat, provide a different and vital function. They offer a venue for mutual wisdom, shared vulnerability, and cross-generational connection. Exploring ways to cultivate and sustain these kinds of open gatherings could further deepen relationships across the congregation and expand the reach of spiritual formation within the church.

REIMAGINING HOSPITALITY AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Stone Church should continue to develop a culture of radical hospitality by creating a welcoming team marked by warmth, attentiveness, and joy. The practices of interpersonal relations and public communications ensure that Stone Church's first impression conveys not only who we are but also who we hope to become.

All aspects of this culture of radical hospitality — from entering the doors on a Sunday morning to social encounters and refreshments afterward — should be the responsibility of the welcoming team. This kind of spirit creates an immediate sense of belonging both for newcomers and long-timers. We recommend offering regular newcomer lunches and extending invitations to small groups that are open and easy to enter. These early relational touchpoints can create the kind of connective tissue that transforms visitors into participants and eventually into members of our community.

Our numerous printed and digital communications — website and social media — are produced by a host of volunteers with differing styles and approaches whose messages are uncoordinated. We recommend hiring a part-time communications manager who would replace the volunteers and ensure message continuity with an eye toward graphic consistency, clarity, accessibility, and emotional invitation. This new position would maintain the new church website, which is expected to be launched within weeks.

We also need to re-examine the number of printed inserts in our bulletin, both for budget and environmental reasons. Wasted paper may unintentionally communicate that we remain a predominantly “analog” church in a digital age, which resonates especially poorly with younger generations.

Signage, banners, pew literature and language used around the campus should reflect our core values: justice, inclusion, and multicultural hospitality. These expressions must also match the lived reality of our congregation — how we act, who we serve, and how we relate to one another.

ENSURING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Several of the recommendations above involve adding paid staff to replace functions now performed by volunteers. Part of the reason is evidence we've collected indicating volunteer burnout. We also believe more paid staffing is financially feasible with one ordained pastor/head of staff, rethinking our money management and fund-raising activities, and factoring in the program benefits of employing expertise to perform critical ongoing tasks.

A comparison study that we requested from the Presbyterian Church (USA) headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, of similar-sized churches in high-cost urban presbyteries around the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia shows that our current budget is in a range that makes staff additions feasible to consider. Stone's staff size in the report includes salaries and benefits for two full-time pastors.

PCUSA churches in high-cost urban areas ranked low to high membership in 2023						
Church	City	State	Members	Staff	Pledges	Expenditures
Calvary	Wilmington	CA	265		0	0
Valley	Portola Valley	CA	266	11	0	0
Trinity	San Carlos	CA	273	6	700,192	606,458
Beverly Hills	Beverly Hills	CA	279	8	0	0
John Knox	Seattle	WA	282		827,708	941,199
Middletown	Media	PA	283		304,315	393,767
Chinese First	New York	NY	284		0	0
Lafayette Avenue	Brooklyn	NY	285	7	344,843	4,068
Carmel	Glenside	PA	294		218,348	426,742
First	Ardmore	PA	298	7	0	0
Newtown Square	Newtown Square	PA	298	7	341,490	423,263
Yorkfield	Elmhurst	IL	298	9	727,844	544,967
Stone Church	San Jose	CA	300	6	579,000	593,809
Supplee Memorial	Maple Glen	PA	304	4	0	0
PC of Western Springs	Western Springs	IL	310	7	426,061	417,959
Park Ridge	Park Ridge	IL	313	9	245,000	698,500
Thompson Memorial	New Hope	PA	317	9	0	0
West Side	Seattle	WA	322	9	808,000	1,436,281
First	River Forest	IL	331	8	910,243	971,283
Korean Church of Boston	Brookline	MA	335		683,638	899,218
Bedford Central	Brooklyn	NY	339		508,132	528,662
Morrisville	Morrisville	PA	343	8	968,285	656,422
Fair Oaks	Oak Park	IL	364	6	491,561	410,241
Westwood	Los Angeles	CA	384	19	741,240	1,618,839
First	Livermore	CA	433	12	1,312,887	1,090,421
Bethany	Seattle	WA	463	17	1,482,883	1,242,141

Our current practice is that the new fiscal year program and budget is determined after an October pledge campaign, which represents 86% of our income. We recommend, based on practice by some financially successful churches, that the coming year's program and budget should be planned first — a “money follows vision” approach. This would allow the pledge campaign to invite people to financially support a compelling, Spirit-led future. Our

messaging would help members clearly understand how their gifts empower a ministry that transforms.

Stone Church should lean into every resource it can around legacy planning, which is an opportunity for members to make long-term commitments that reflect their values and faith through bequests, endowments, or planned gifts. We also recommend these changes:

- Evaluating the potential for responsible and mission-aligned facility rentals as a supplemental source of revenue.
- Pursuing grant opportunities to support initiatives that intersect with community needs and our church's vision, especially partnerships that build bridges across the neighborhood.
- Creating clear and accessible giving pathways for younger generations by embracing online platforms, mobile giving, and cultivating a culture of generosity that speaks to their values and preferred methods of engagement



OUR COURTYARD

Our social hall links the chapel, out of frame to the left, from sanctuary on the right

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Our Liturgical Arts Group decorated the sanctuary for Pentecost



