

**PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY STATEMENT**  
***WALLACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH***

**INTRODUCTION.** As Wallace Presbyterian Church occupies its new campus in College Park, Maryland, we have developed this statement of our hopes and intentions for ministry. This expresses our consensus about who we are, what we aspire to be and to do, and how we desire to function.

**A. IDENTITY – Who We Are.**

Wallace is a congregation of people in relationship with one another through Jesus Christ. Our relationships cross the barriers destroyed by Christ, who has reconciled all believers to God and adopted us into the same family.

Wallace is a local expression of a vast congregation of people brought together in Christ in all times and places, called from all tribes and nations, known as the Church. Our congregation has a relationship with all believers in local churches near and far.

Wallace is a member of the Presbyterian Church in America, an evangelical and confessional denomination in the Reformed tradition. We affirm our commitment to the confessions of faith and standards adhered to by our denomination, and support denominational-sponsored work on behalf of the gospel.

Wallace has emphasized “the Word of God from pulpit and classroom” for decades, while coming more recently to a greater appreciation of the need to emphasize both truth *and* grace. We aspire to express God's truth and respond to His grace in fresh ways relevant to our time and place.

We are “in the world but not of it.” The congregation spends most of its time scattered, rather than gathered together, as we engage in activities common to all humanity. Members’ day-to-day life and work in the world, lived for the glory of God, is “kingdom work” and the most likely point of contact between Christ's Church and the world on behalf of the gospel.

Wallace is a century-old congregation given a unique opportunity to organize anew for ministry that is relevant to changed times and circumstances. Combining the blessings of a long-established church and the opportunities of a newly-planted church, we are poised to write the next chapter of our congregation’s life together.

**B. CONTEXT – Where We Are.** Wallace is located in a densely populated, and racially and ethnically mixed, suburban area that offers an unparalleled opportunity to cultivate a Christian community that is unique in demonstrating how God, in Christ, is reconciling the world to Himself.

Although our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools are marked by close proximity and interaction between very diverse people groups, our social context promotes individual lifestyles that are highly fragmented, socially-isolating, and transient for both us and our neighbors.

We note the black racial majority of the county in which our church campus is located, as well as the fact that our communities are home to large numbers of immigrants from virtually every nation and every religious group. A significantly large community of first-generation, Spanish-speaking immigrants lies less than a mile from our campus

In addition, our church campus is located directly across from the campus of the University of Maryland where more than 35,000 students--future local, state, national, and world leaders--study. The university is an important element in our context because it presents an annually replanted field ready for ministry each new school year. The university also anchors a relatively stable mix of diverse people, not dominated by a particular racial or ethnic group, around our church campus, continuing to make our experience with traditional ministries to families relevant.

In this local context we see the need for a Christian community committed to Biblical faith and practical Christianity that can win a hearing for the Christian faith among all peoples by the transforming presence of Christ in our worship, witness and relationships.

**C. RESOURCES – What We Have.** Our foundation is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His gifts to our congregation include men and women endowed with wisdom from walking with Him for many years. Our multi-generational congregation is highly educated, theologically informed, generous, and racially and ethnically diverse. We have been blessed with years of high-quality Bible-based preaching and teaching. Our new campus includes a building where our worship and teaching is centered, a separate “House at the Crossroads” where ministry to our community is centered, and a third multi-purpose building, all surrounded by park-like grounds for multiple uses.

**D. MISSION STATEMENT – Why We Exist.** Given our history, context, and set of resources, we believe the mission of Wallace is to be a community of Christ, centered on God's Word, where worship, teaching, fellowship and ministry come together in the power of the Spirit so that people of differing backgrounds and gifts, being reconciled to God and each other, impact their families, communities, city, nation, and world with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the glory of God.

**E. VISION STATEMENT – Where We Hope to Go.** Our vision for Wallace is, by the grace of God, to be a significant congregation relevant to our unique context and culture. We hope to be significant by *making a difference* for having served Christ in this time and place. We hope to be relevant by *ministering* to the needs of people immediately around us and within our larger cultural context.

To realize this vision of accomplishing our mission, we seek to be guided by the following statements of purpose, operation, and organization describing who we purpose to be, how we desire to function, and how we hope to organize for ministry.

**F. PURPOSE STATEMENT – Who We Purpose to Be.** As a congregation, we desire to be a people who:

- worship, love, and celebrate the Lord;
- strengthen, encourage, serve, and build up one another in God's word and Christ's love;
- share the Good News; and
- serve others with the compassion of Christ.

To accomplish this goal, we seek to develop the habits of:

- being always motivated by God's grace;
- focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ;
- praying without ceasing;
- depending upon the Holy Spirit;
- proclaiming the Word of God from pulpit and classroom, and sharing it in person;
- watching over one another in Christian love;
- discipling one another in our Christian lives and in the development of our gifts for ministry;
- nurturing family life;
- developing programs and structures which facilitate the ministries to which God is calling our members;
- making sure that worship, teaching, fellowship and ministry interact vitally in all of our activities;
- demonstrating the in-breaking presence of the Kingdom of God to our communities, in word and deed;
- living together as *one* people of God gathered from all nations, backgrounds, and races;
- taking the gospel to all peoples in all nations; and
- living all of our lives to the glory of God.

**G. OPERATIONAL STATEMENT – How We Desire to Function.** Significant churches have distinct identities which are clear both to members and surrounding communities. We always want to discern Wallace's specific calling based on the gifts of our leaders and members, as well as in response to the opportunities in our community. We want to do what we can do best and not try to imitate what others are gifted to do better.

The following sections describe how we will seek to apply this general principle in four primary activities - Worship, Teaching, Fellowship, and Ministry - following the example of the first local churches described in the book of the *Acts of the Apostles*. We long to be motivated to act in these areas solely in response to the grace of God revealed in Christ and founded on His Word.

**1. WORSHIP.** The believer's primary response to God's grace is in worship. Because God is holy, awesome, majestic, mighty, sovereign and glorious, we seek to worship Him with an appropriate awe and *reverence*. But because God is also good, gracious, kind, compassionate and merciful, we also seek to worship Him with *joy*. Since we are a part of the Church, the great company of the people of God in all times and places, we use the great hymns and prayers of the Church, from across time and place, which characterize the one people of God. We desire our worship to transform us and not merely reflect or reinforce popular culture. We strive for an excellence in worship that befits the glory of God, and we desire the congregation to participate actively in worship.

In agreement with our denominational confession, we believe God wants us to worship Him in the way he has commanded, and we seek to do so. Thus in our worship, we

- sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs;
- emphasize the reading of the Scriptures;
- listen to the preaching of the Word of God;
- pray together, making use of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession;
- bring our tithes and offerings as expressions of our love; and
- share in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, remembering God's promises, celebrating Christ's presence, and covenanting together as God's people.

We place a high priority on the preaching of the *Word* of God and the administration of the *Sacraments*. Together they declare God's promises to us, point us to what Christ has done, teach us to feed upon Him, and confirm us in the fellowship of the Church.

**2. TEACHING.** Because God describes His Son as “the Word,” and has revealed Himself to us through the written Word, we acknowledge that God desires each believer to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ inwardly through the work of the Holy Spirit as He applies the Word to us. We respond to the grace of God’s revelation of Himself in the Word by letting the Word of Christ dwell in us. Thus, the teaching of the Word of God is a central focus of what we do. The aim of our teaching is not for members to gain knowledge for its own sake, but for every member to grow in the grace of God and into maturity as a follower of Christ.

Passing on the fullness of the gospel to all members of the congregation and to coming generations is a central responsibility of the Church. We believe that we have a specific corporate responsibility to teach children and the uninformed the fundamentals of God’s special revelation found in God's Word, the Bible. Thus, in addition to the preaching of the Word, we provide for Christian education for both children and adults.

Teaching, along with ministry, is also a primary means by which the Church fulfills Jesus’ great commission to his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, ... *teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:19-20). Thus, we desire to direct some of our teaching to the world around us. In our society, often described as “post-Christian,” we cannot expect a significant proportion of our neighbors to be drawn into our worship, as a first step, to hear our teaching. Therefore, we seek to find places and ways where our neighbors are more likely to be available to hear our teaching. We also seek to follow apostle’s example

of teaching by engaging the world in *dialogue* that respects their status as fellow human beings made in God's image.

The House at the Crossroads is a particular place we have built with the hope of locating there activities that will provide opportunities for gospel dialogue with our community. We seek to engage these neighbors on our physical campus, but on their cultural ground, with dialogue that is relevant to them and that will lead them ultimately to worship.

**3. FELLOWSHIP.** Fellowship is also a response to God's grace. God has called each believer not only into a relationship with Him, but into a relationship with one another in the body of Christ. Fellowship with one another is also a primary focus of what we do because it is the natural expression of being in relationship with one another.

Fellowship is primarily experienced among members of the local church. The body of Christ transcends nations, tribes, times, and geographical limits. (Rev. 7:9) Yet here on earth, in our visible expression of life with Christ, we belong to a local church, Wallace Presbyterian Church, and as individuals we only experience the larger body of Christ as we gather locally for worship, teaching, fellowship, and ministry. We encourage all members of the congregation to participate actively in opportunities for Christian fellowship and we seek to provide opportunities to do so.

**a. Sub-congregations.** We recognize that local churches that are larger than 200 members (such as Wallace) are inevitably made up of sub-congregations. These smaller groups of members are extended spiritual families that often incorporate worship, teaching, fellowship, and ministry. They may be defined as a group small enough for its members to know everyone else in the sub-congregation, although not necessarily intimately. Sub-congregations are vital to the life of a healthy church. Assimilation into the church, growth in discipleship, and ministry to one another, take place primarily at this level.

We hope every member will be a part of some sub-congregation to experience their relationship to others in Christ as they receive instruction together, participate in fellowship, worship informally, and minister to and with one another. Natural connections (for example, geography, gender, age, or ministry interests) can form the basis of a sub-congregation, but they can be established in a more pre-meditated manner, as in the case of the adult teaching fellowships and Parish groups at Wallace or in the formation of "small groups." Most active members participate in several and overlapping sub-congregations and small groups.

**b. Small Groups.** Every person needs a family of intimate relationships for nurture and accountability, and with whom to share the joys and trials of the Christian life. Jesus demonstrated the need for, and the role of, a small group by selecting and being with his twelve disciples. Historically small groups have played a significant role in the numerical growth of Wallace and in the spiritual growth of members who have participated in them. We support and encourage the formation of small groups of believers meeting all across our city for Bible Study, prayer, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism.

**4. MINISTRY.** While fellowship as a response to God's grace allows believers to experience the bonds of love among us as a local congregation, the appropriate response to God's grace is also service, or ministry beyond ourselves. That may happen as members care for one another within the congregation or as members seek to serve in the world outside the local church. We encourage all members of the congregation to understand their spiritual gifts and to seek to use them in ministry to others.

**a. Ministry to One Another.** While important for fellowship, sub-congregations and small groups are also the primary places where the members of Wallace have the opportunity to minister to each other. Ministry at this level results in fellowship, discipleship, assimilation, and outreach. While small groups may have different orientations (for example, towards Bible Study, prayer, fellowship or ministry), the dynamic in them is the same. We recognize that pastoral care finds its most fundamental expression at this level. The priesthood of all believers means that members care for one another. Leaders of sub-congregations and small groups must not see themselves ultimately as "officers" but as pastors.

**b. Members as Ministers to Others.** Ministry is people ministering to people. It is sharing our lives with one another and the world around us. It is being the people of God. Every child of God has been given a gift of the Holy Spirit which enables him or her to be a blessing to others (1 Cor. 12:7). The Lord directs the ministry that He wants to be taking place by the gifts and vision that He gives to His people (Eph. 4: 7-8).

We encourage all members of the congregation to minister in keeping with their gifts and where they are called to serve. We believe that it is important for members to share their sense of calling with the Session and others, so that those members with a common vision can have an effective ministry together. The effectiveness of any ministry is directly related to the extent that the members "own" and take initiative in ministry.

The job of our pastors and teachers is to provide the people of God with the instruction, training, pastoral care and encouragement necessary to function effectively as a part of the Body of Christ (Eph 4:11). We believe that when Wallace members are doing what they are called to do and when they are expressing the gifts God has given them, they are effective, creative and joyful. When any of us serve out of loyalty to the institution or to fulfill someone else's expectations, "burn out" is inevitable. The difference will be clear to see.

We do not want to overwhelm members with burdens arising from serving the local church so that they are not free to serve the world. We believe that the programs of our church are designed to provide opportunities for ministry. However, we recognize that programs do not minister, people do. When people end up serving programs, there is either no longer a vision or a need. Ministry does not cease if such programs end.

**c. The Unique Calling of the Church.** We affirm that the Church of Jesus Christ has a unique calling. It is to declare the Word of God. The spiritual nature of the Church ensures

that only the means of grace (the Word, prayer, sacraments, and fellowship) are effective in building the Kingdom of God. We affirm that the Church must speak the Word of God to the

civil and moral order, but we must never allow the Church to be used to build the kingdoms of the world, or the Church to use worldly means (power, politics, the sword, money, or popularity) to build the Kingdom of God.

We believe that Christians have a God-given civic and social duty to society. Individuals are free to join or organize for the pursuit of moral, social, economic, and political ends, but this is not the Church's calling. The greatest gift that Wallace as a local church can give to our community and our nation is to be the people of God.

**d. Church Work and the Work of the Church.** We recognize a distinction between two areas of Christian work:

*Wallace “church work”* is that which members and leaders of Wallace do when we are gathered together. This work manifests itself primarily in worship and Christian education. This type of work falls under the oversight of the Session and is facilitated by our Wallace church staff.

*The “work of the Church”* is what all individual members of Wallace do when we are scattered. This type of work involves all of our lives and ministry in the world--at home, in the office, on the campus, and in the community. This work of the Church is sometimes promoted by forming or participating in specialized ministries not supervised by the local church. However, the local church can encourage this work as it has opportunity and resources, and primarily by supporting its members involved in those ministries. Examples of this type of work include the Gospel Mission, Young Life, Campus Crusade, the Gideons, and Community Bible Study. Unlike Wallace church work, the work of the Church falls under the primary oversight and initiative of the individual member.

**e. Community Outreach.** Since the gospel is demonstrated in both word and deed, the House of Crossroads is a key resource not only for teaching ministries but for non-teaching ministries, as well. We offer the building to Wallace members for use as they pursue the callings they may have to community ministries. In keeping with our philosophy of ministry, we encourage the outreach done at the House of the Crossroads to be consciously relationally focused.

**f. Areas of Outreach Emphasis.** Based on our context, history and gifts, we have identified three areas for particular outreach emphasis.

1) The University Community - We recognize that we have a unique opportunity to reach university students from home and abroad. We also have a pastoral responsibility to the Christians on the campus who are away from home and church. In addition we believe that as a Reformed church, we should offer a perspective which takes the mind seriously, and does all things to the glory of God.

2) All Peoples - We recognize that "ethnic" churches have often provided great support for their members, families and communities. However there is no Biblical permission for churches organized according to race. On the contrary we are called to be agents of reconciliation, breaking down barriers, (Ephesians 2:11-22) and demonstrating that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) Therefore, by God's grace, we intend to be a church where all the people of God gather together to worship the Lord, fellowship with one another, and to minister together the love of Christ to our broken, hurting, and divided world, regardless of race or nationality.

3) Our Local Neighborhoods – Because the scripture specifically instructs us to love our neighbors, we recognize the priority of sharing the love of Christ with those we see most often. This includes the members of our extended families, those with whom we work or study, and those near whom we live. We purpose to serve and to pray for our neighbors as we look to God to extend His kingdom through these relationships.

**g. Pastoral Care at Wallace.** We affirm the priesthood of all believers. Basic pastoral care must take place at the level where we each relate to each other in Christian love. Elders, Deacons, and Pastors are called to special roles within the priesthood of all believers.

***Elders.*** We affirm that the primary calling of all Wallace Elders is to pastor God's people at Wallace. To do so, Elders need to know the "flock"--by visiting, by counseling and by praying with and for them. They must be both diligent and gentle in exhorting, comforting, encouraging, and teaching God's people at Wallace as they guard this flock of Jesus Christ entrusted to their care. As enjoined by the Word of God, the Elders intend, by God's grace, to exercise a leadership style contrary to that found in the world. Acknowledging that they are not to be controlling or authoritarian, they seek to be servants who lead by example, "coaching" and discipling God's people at Wallace in Christian living and service. In turn, the Word of God calls upon the members of the congregation to be obedient, understanding, and supportive of the Elders in their ministry.

***Deacons.*** We acknowledge that the Apostles established a unique and ongoing ministry of mercy for every local congregation, which is to be led by elected and ordained Deacons. This ministry is primarily to the needy within the local congregation and then in the Church at large. Deacons called to this ministry are spiritually-minded men with acknowledged gifts for the work involved.

***Pastors.*** We acknowledge that God has gifted some in His Church with special gifts to preach and teach His Word. These teaching elders (that is, pastors) are to equip all Wallace members for ministry through discipleship. Pastoral counseling and visitation are an outgrowth of these responsibilities.

**H. ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENT --How We Organize for Work.** The formal structure for our local church is laid out in the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America. Within that general structure, the Session, composed of Teaching Elders

and Ruling Elders, attempts to do everything with decency and in order by establishing some agreed upon principles and procedures.

**1. Pastors (Teaching Elders).** Teaching elders have special responsibilities for the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and public worship. Their other responsibilities may include ministry through discipleship, pastoral counseling and visitation.

**2. Ruling Elders.** Ruling elders are given special responsibility for the pastoral care of those within the Parish in which they are living or to which they are assigned.

**3. Church Staff.** The organization and direction of some Wallace church work requires full-time attention and the Session may hire individuals, in addition to pastors, to lead these ministries. These professional staff members include those with gifts in administration, such as those who work in the church office, or in ministry, such as those who lead in worship or Christian education. Staff members lead these ministries, first by actively serving in them, and then by nurturing, supporting, and directing other staff and volunteers.

The Session does not hire staff to do the work of the Church, however. Instead, as a congregation, we may support full-time workers, employed by others, as a part of our support for missions

**4. Deacons.** Besides the work of the ministry of mercy, the Session has assigned to the Deacons responsibility for keeping the Wallace property ready and available for most effective use in Wallace church work.

**5. Teams.** Those involved in church work and work of the church gather as teams to carry out the work. Teams at Wallace are to be *participants* carrying out a vision and organizing to do the actual work of ministry. Teams do not exist as boards to direct the work of others or merely to grant and withhold permission.

**Church Work Teams.** The Session, working with staff and/or members of the congregation, gathers in teams to pray about and lead Wallace church work, specifically in Worship, Teaching, Fellowship, and Ministry. These teams are led by a member of the Session. Examples include the Worship Team and the Missions Team.

**Work of the Church (Ministry) Teams.** As God leads and provides gifts, members of Wallace may gather in teams to pray about and do the work of the Church. These teams are organized as needs are expressed and members come forward to lead and participate in meeting those needs. As appropriate, the Session may assign a member of the Session to be a liaison between each Wallace Ministry Team and the Session. The liaison function is primarily one of communication and support. The Session Liaison is not the Team Leader unless that member has a specific calling to that ministry. Examples of teams are the House at the Crossroads Ministry Team and the Bookshelf Ministry Team.

**7. The Place of the Family.** We affirm the priority of the family in the plan of God for saving a people with whom he has covenanted (made a binding promise). We acknowledge the need for the local church to support Christian parents in their family responsibilities. These

responsibilities are spiritual, physical and emotional, and include worship, nurture, discipline, education, protection and provision.

**8. Parishes.** As a primary means of organizing our life for the purposes of formal oversight by the elders and as a vehicle to promote ministry to one another, the Wallace Session has established geographically-based parishes. Every member of Wallace is a member of a parish, which is made up of all the Wallace members and adherents living within particular geographic boundaries. Parishes provide a structure for members to become acquainted with elders and with other members of Wallace. Parish organization also provides the elders with a structure to assist them in shepherding the congregation. Parishes are not primarily meetings, but are relationships that are lived out as best meets the needs of the individual parishes.

**I. SUMMARY.** We desire all members of Wallace Presbyterian Church to live up to and be inspired by their status as children of God, responding to his grace by forming a local community of believers demonstrating and proclaiming through its worship, teaching, fellowship, and ministry, the Good News of how God is reconciling people from all nations and backgrounds to himself and to one another through the work of Jesus Christ. Our leaders pastor and equip the congregation for this goal by leading worship, providing teaching, encouraging fellowship and supporting ministry. We encourage members of Wallace to take initiative in worship, teaching, fellowship and ministry as the Holy Spirit has gifted and called them. In this way, by God's grace, Wallace Presbyterian Church will be a transforming presence in the world to the glory of God.