

**WIDER NET AD HOC VISION COMMITTEE REPORT  
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## **WIDER NET AD HOC VISION COMMITTEE REPORT SUMMARY**

In June of 2012, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee began the task of considering a long range plan for A Wider Net. After discussing theology, reading from two books, listening to our church, and listening to our community, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee made the following findings:

- Although initiated as a 5 year plan, the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown was intended to be a long term commitment that should continue. (See page 9 for further explanation).
- The church should continue to refer to the work in MidCity/Georgetown and those growing relationships as “A Wider Net.” (p. 10)
- The focus of our relationship should continue to be the original area identified in the original Wider Net proposal (MidCity and Georgetown). (p. 10)
- The 4 models of engagement (“working for,” “working with,” “being with,” and “being for”) are not mutually exclusive, and each of these models of engagement is valid; therefore, the church should continue to provide opportunities for all models of engagement. (See pages 10-11 for an explanation of these models of engagement).
- A continued commitment to listening and learning before speaking and acting is crucial to the deepening of our relationship with MidCity/Georgetown. (p. 12)
- Listening and learning applies not only to the community but also to Northminster members. (p. 12)
- “Relationships are reciprocal.” (p. 13)
- “True success is defined by our ‘faithfulness to the neighborhood.’” (p. 14)
- The most effective means of “organizing” the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown is deemed to be that of friendship, of

faithfulness to the neighborhood, of a permanent presence, and of further development of partnerships with churches and organizations already present within the community. (See pages 30-34 for a complete explanation).

Considering these findings and reviewing A Wider Net in the context of the original proposal – a person, a place, and an initial act of ministry, these affirmations of the church's involvement in MidCity as well as these recommendations for further action take into account the idea of the initial proposal, the reality of the relationship between Northminster Baptist Church and MidCity/Georgetown, and the future of that relationship. The final report of the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee can be summed up as follows:

We are called to be “A People.”  
Our “sense of place” calls for ownership.  
We are called to maintain a “faithful presence.”

Details of this committee's work, explanations of the findings of this committee, and support for the affirmations and recommendations of this committee are found in the following “FINAL REPORT.”

# WIDER NET AD HOC VISION COMMITTEE

## FINAL REPORT

### THE HISTORY:

In 1998, the Northminster Baptist Church Long Range Planning Committee recommended the following:

[E]stablish a planning committee to identify the opportunity for a deep and broad involvement in a particular neighborhood that could provide permanent programs in which church members would be active over a sustained period of time. Work could be achieved in partnership with institutions (religious or otherwise) currently involved in the area. A goal of the project would be to identify a specific area of need that is not being addressed and establish plans to provide necessary support. <sup>1</sup>

Therefore, in 1999, the congregation appointed a Special Missions Project Committee, and in 2001, the Building committee and the Special Missions Project Committee presented a joint proposal titled, "A Wider Net." As a part of that proposal, the Special Missions Project Committee made the following recommendations:

- Project Overview: The off-site component involves a long term missions commitment to an inner city neighborhood so that we can better serve community residents who are not Northminster members. Specifically, the off-site component includes a minimum 5 year commitment to the MidCity/Georgetown neighborhood, during which Northminster will 1) partner with Habitat for Humanity in an aggressive homebuilding effort, 2) hire as part of the Northminster staff a community minister whose responsibility will be facilitating and coordinating opportunities for Northminster members to minister to residents in the neighborhood, 3) establish a physical presence in the neighborhood, and 4) develop ministry programs in response to requests from neighborhood residents, touching their lives spiritually, physically, and socially and empowering them in the name of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, Jr., J. Kelley, "Letter to Northminster Baptist Church," June 5, 2001. (Quoting 1998 Long Range Planning Committee Report, 1998). Appendix 4.

<sup>2</sup> Special Missions Project Committee, "A Wider Net," 2001. Appendix 5.

- Ministry Goals: Begin and nurture a community ministry that would bring hope and opportunity to people in the Georgetown/MidCity area of Jackson, Mississippi, by touching their lives spiritually, physically, and socially and by leading them to resources and cooperative activities that will empower them in the name of Christ.<sup>3</sup>
  
- Ministry Guidelines: Hear and incorporate the community's needs and desires when planning activities, through ongoing communication with neighborhood residents, associations, and businesses. Partner and coordinate with existing churches and agencies performing ministries in the neighborhood.<sup>4</sup>
  
- Ministry Possibilities:
  - Home building in conjunction with proposal submitted by Habitat for Humanity
  - Adult literacy classes
  - After-school program for children/youth (cooperate with Operation Shoestring)
  - Home repair for existing homes (particularly elderly homeowners)
  - Clean-up and upgrading of community spaces (parks, playgrounds)
  - Food pantry
  - Drug and alcohol rehabilitation
  - Job training and computer classes
  - Other activities as needs and opportunity become apparent<sup>5</sup>

This community ministry was to be undertaken in the framework of “a person, a place, and an initial act of ministry.”<sup>6</sup> The Wider Net proposal included a fund raising component which encompassed these Special Missions Project Committee recommendations in the amount of \$1,048,960 to be used over a 5 year period.<sup>7</sup>

The congregation approved “A Wider Net” in 2001.<sup>8</sup> “An initial act of ministry” began immediately with Northminster members identifying 20 lots to purchase for the partnership with Habitat for Humanity. In addition, Northminster partnered with Operation Shoestring to assist with breakfasts and devotionals for

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Northminster Baptist Church, “Minutes of Called Business Meeting,” June 10, 2001. Appendix 6.

its summer campers. "A person" was identified in 2004 as Jill Barnes Buckley, Northminster Baptist Church Associate Pastor for Community Ministry. In addition, there continued to be the presence of the pastors and the people of Northminster in and around the neighborhood. Over the course of time, "a place" has been associated with Northminster's use of the MidCity Community Center, also known as "The Yellow Church." Although the initial plan was based on a 5 year proposal, the funding continued to be sufficient to maintain the ministry. Funding continued through contributions to the Wider Net Designated Fund.

In 2009, the Deacon Board appointed an Ad Hoc Wider Net Review Committee which made the following recommendations:

- Continue WN [Wider Net] but place it under the umbrella of the NBC Missions Committee;
- Extend Jill's contract as the Associate Pastor for Community Missions.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of these recommendations, in 2010, the activities of Wider Net in MidCity/Georgetown were placed under the umbrella of the Local & Direct Missions Committee, a pre-existing, standing committee of the church.

The scope of activities in the MidCity/Georgetown area continued to grow, such that in 2011, the Local & Direct Missions Committee created a Wider Net Sub-Committee. The Wider Net Sub-Committee recommended that the Deacon Board create a Wider Net Ministries Committee as a separate, standing committee of the church and that a committee be established to consider long range planning for Wider Net. As a result, in 2011, the Deacon Board appointed a Wider Net Transition Committee to consider the requests of the Wider Net Sub-Committee.

After consideration, the Wider Net Sub-Committee and the Wider Net Transition Committee made the following joint recommendations:

- Wider Net Missions regular program expenditures be folded into the church general budget beginning in 2012 (adding approximately \$30,000/year to the annual budget);
- Form an Ad Hoc Wider Net Vision Committee to determine long range plans for the Wider Net;
- Appoint a Wider Net Ministries standing committee; and
- Maintain the name "Wider Net".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wider Net Review Committee, "Committee Recommendation," August 16, 2009. Appendix 7.

In response to these recommendations, the salary of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry was folded into the church general budget in 2012. In addition, the Wider Net Sub-Committee of the Local & Direct Missions Committee was replaced with a standing committee – Wider Net Ministries Committee. The name “Wider Net” continues to describe the ongoing relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown. This new committee is now partially funded through the Northminster general budget. In addition, an ongoing designated fund provides financial resources to the Wider Net Ministries Committee, and in 2015, a designated fund was funded through a special gift to specifically support the establishment of a “sense of place” in MidCity/Georgetown. In May of 2012, the Deacon Board appointed a Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee to consider the long range plans of Wider Net. After formulation of a full committee, the first meeting of the committee occurred on June 26, 2012.

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<sup>10</sup>Board of Deacons of Northminster Baptist Church, “Minutes of Board of Deacons,” July 17, 2011. Appendix 9.

## THE PROCESS:

The Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee began the process of considering the long range plans of Northminster Baptist Church for a Wider Net by reviewing the history and purpose of the original Wider Net proposal. This process began with a review of the church by-laws and church covenant, the original Wider Net proposal, Deacon Board reports and minutes associated with Wider Net including the reports and recommendations of the 1998 Long Range Planning Committee, the Wider Net Review Committee, the Wider Net Sub-Committee (notes from meetings with community partners), and the Wider Net Transition Committee. In addition to reviewing the reflective comments of Jill Buckley from the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of a Wider Net,<sup>11</sup> the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee reviewed the 2010 senior report, "A Wider Net: Beyond the Walls and the Possibilities Which Lie Before Us," of Courtney Allen, a masters of divinity student at Wake Forest University School of Divinity and a child of Northminster Baptist Church. The Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee also took a walking tour of the MidCity neighborhood.

## THE THEOLOGY:

Based on the recommendations and guidance of Senior Pastor, Chuck Poole, and Associate Pastor for Community Ministry, Jill Buckley, the committee spent a period of time in theological discussion related to the role of the church and the role of the individual in community. Chuck Poole provided "Theological Reflections on *A Wider Net*," a written summary of his theological notes on Northminster's relationship with MidCity/Georgetown. The committee was asked to read the book, *Friendship at the Margins*, by Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl, as well as excerpts from the book, *Living Without Enemies*, by Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owen.<sup>12</sup> Scriptural passages discussed by the committee included an emphasis on the gospel of Luke and Mark 4:26-27 and additional passages: Isaiah 65, Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Matthew 25; Mark 16:15; John 3:8; John 10:10; John 14:23; John 17:21-23; Romans 12:1; Philippians 2; Philippians 4:8; and II Corinthians 5:18.<sup>13</sup>

The theological inquiry of the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee began with a review of the written theological statement provided by Chuck Poole. He provided a single sentence in summation of his theological framework for Northminster's relationship with MidCity/Georgetown:

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<sup>11</sup> Appendix 14.

<sup>12</sup> Appendices 12 and 13, respectively.

<sup>13</sup> Appendix 10.

The gospel to which we have given our lives calls us beyond our own comfort to embrace, and be embraced by, the wider world around us.<sup>14</sup>

He suggested a reading of the gospels of Matthew and Luke to assist in hearing “Jesus’ deep passion and wide compassion for whomever is most in need of help and hope.”<sup>15</sup> This theology formed the basis of the original Wider Net proposal. In addressing the question of how to proceed with this relationship with MidCity/Georgetown, Chuck Poole recommended that we commit ourselves to listen, that we join the community in identifying needs and community strengths (asset mapping) rather than importing our ideas into community, and that we continue the process of transforming mission into friendship. He states, “As a church, we can make a congregational decision to adopt a mission program or project, but reconciling and redeeming friendship is the work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>16</sup> He also encouraged the church to measure success by “the lives changed, friends found, hope given and love embodied.”<sup>17</sup> In essence, “the worth of our work is measured by the spiritual metrics of reconciliation, friendship, hope and joy.”<sup>18</sup>

In determining how this theological statement applies to Northminster today, the committee began with a review of the church by-laws and church covenant. In addition to the multiple references to the church’s presence in the world and God’s purpose in the world, the church covenant also states:

Realizing that it was to the world of human need that our Lord came, that it was for the world of people that He gave Himself and that it is in the world that we find ourselves called to be His servants, we dedicate our lives to ministering in the world, ever alert to the voice of human need wherever the cry may be heard.<sup>19</sup>

The committee found as follows:

- Although initiated as a 5 year plan, the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown was intended to be a long term commitment that should continue.
  - Northminster was founded on the gospel teachings to minister to the world, not just to ourselves.

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<sup>14</sup> Chuck Poole, “Theological Reflections on *A Wider Net*,” 2012. Appendix 11.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Northminster Baptist Church, “Covenant.” Appendix 3.

- The 1998 Long Range Planning Committee planted the seed for A Wider Net by recommending “permanent programs” over a “sustained period of time.”<sup>20</sup>
- The Wider Net proposal recommended a “long term missions commitment”<sup>21</sup>
- The church should continue to refer to the work in MidCity/Georgetown and those growing relationships as “A Wider Net.”
  - Matthew 13:47 reads, “The Kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind.”
  - In 2011, the Wider Net Sub-Committee of the Local & Direct Missions Committee and the Wider Net Transition Committee recommended the continuation of the name.<sup>22</sup>
- The focus of our relationship should continue to be the original area identified in the original Wider Net proposal (MidCity and Georgetown).<sup>23</sup>

Although the bulk of our relationships are grounded in MidCity, the relationships are growing, and the committee determined that the original area (including Georgetown) will allow continuation of that growth.

Finding that the relationship with MidCity / Georgetown should continue, the bulk of the committee’s further discussion centered on “how” our relationship should continue. The committee framed this discussion around the four models of engagement as stated in *Living Without Enemies*, by Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owen. The four models of engagement<sup>24</sup> are as follows:

1. “Working for” – This is the conventional model of engagement which usually results in a brief, one time encounter that is beneficial to both parties but involves one party doing something to “fix” the situation for the other party. Often this results in relationships of inequality. This model tends to be expressed through programs or events in which one party gives and the other party receives. Considering this model in light of the life of Jesus, Jesus worked for the people by healing the sick.
2. “Working with” – This model of engagement extends the encounter by expressing respect for the gifts or abilities of both parties. Although still usually a single encounter, the parties share the responsibility of accomplishing the task making the task easier than if either party

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<sup>20</sup> Williams. Appendix 4.

<sup>21</sup> “A Wider Net.” Appendix 5.

<sup>22</sup> “Minutes of Board of Deacons,” July 17, 2011. Appendix 9.

<sup>23</sup> See Maps, Appendix 2.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owens, *Living Without Enemies* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 20-47. Appendix 13.

attempted the task separately. This model encourages listening as well as the empowerment of parties to solve their own problems. The result is often an appreciation of the experience as well as the result. This model is consistent with programming and events in which both parties are equal leaders and participants. Considering this model in light of the life of Jesus, Jesus worked with the disciples, teaching and training them. Jesus worked with the people, feeding thousands with the fish and loaves found among the crowd.

3. "Being with" – Both parties experience the situation in this model of engagement, but the authority over the situation remains in the hands of one party while the other party simply offers support through physical presence. This is a relationship built on listening and learning, but the power to remedy the situation does not change hands and is not shared. There is no assumption that it is possible or that it is appropriate to solve the problem of another. This model is experienced more often in smaller-scale relationships and individual experiences. Considering this model in light of the life of Jesus, the incarnation of Jesus can be expressed as Jesus being of God with us in a way that had not been apparent before.
4. "Being for" – This model of engagement provides the least connection. One party is aware of the needs of another and understands that God encourages sharing of burdens, but for various personal reasons the party cannot engage further. Examples of such reasons may be time constraints, personal needs, physical or financial limitations, uncertainty as to how to proceed, or even simple fear. Considering this model in light of the gospel teachings, we experience the continuing spiritual presence of God even though Jesus is not physically present with us and even though we often raise barriers that prevent our relationship with God to reach its full potential.

After considering these four models of engagement, the committee found as follows:

- The 4 models of engagement ("working for," "working with," "being with," and "being for") are not mutually exclusive, and each of these models of engagement is valid; therefore, the church should continue to provide opportunities for all models of engagement.<sup>25</sup>

The committee concluded that different members of our church will be more comfortable with different models of engagement at different times. Home repairs for the elderly and lot maintenance for abandoned lots may

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<sup>25</sup>Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, "Minutes," September 6, 2012. Appendix 16.

tend to fit within the “working for” model. Neighborhood cleanup and establishment of speed bumps on Wood Street may tend to fit within the “working with” model. Attending funerals and sitting and praying with families following a death in the family may fit within the “being with” model. Gifts of money and prayers within the walls of Northminster may fit within the “being for” model. All models are valid. Because all models are valid, we should not expect the same involvement and commitment from all people, and we also should continue to provide various opportunities.

- A continued commitment to listening and learning before speaking and acting is crucial to the deepening of our relationship with MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>26</sup>

All of the models of engagement involve listening to the hopes and dreams of the community rather than imposing hopes and dreams on the community. As stated in *Living Without Enemies*, “[I]t’s not a bad idea to wait and listen for a while before assuming you’re the right person, in the right place, at the right time to be genuinely helpful.”<sup>27</sup> As stated in the original Wider Net proposal, ministry programs should be developed “in response to requests from neighborhood residents.”<sup>28</sup> The proposal also gave ministry guidelines that included, “Hear and incorporate the community’s needs and desires when planning activities, through ongoing communication with neighborhood residents, associations, and businesses.”<sup>29</sup>

- Listening and learning applies not only to the community but also to Northminster members.<sup>30</sup>

If the church is to acknowledge that all models of engagement are valid, the church must not impose certain models on members who are not seeking that model of engagement. After listening to our church, the committee determined that moving forward with programming or experiences works best when individuals are informed and know what to expect and what is expected.

Reading *Friendship at the Margins*, by Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl, provided the committee with a better understanding of why our relationship with MidCity/Georgetown has transformed from one of “mission” to one of “relationship” – from one of “ministry” to one of “presence.” From the original Wider Net proposal, the church was challenged to listen – to decentralize the decision-making process and to allow participation of the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Wells, 23. Appendix 13.

<sup>28</sup> “A Wider Net.” Appendix 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> “Minutes,” September 6, 2012. Appendix 16.

community. We avoided a cause driven model that would have allowed us to “help” but remain disconnected. Instead, our relationship developed in slow, small, deliberate ways that were based on the community’s voiced needs – after school programming, neighborhood cleanup, speed bumps, increased safety.

Considering further development of the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown in light of *Friendship at the Margins*, the committee found as follows:

- “Relationships are reciprocal.”<sup>31</sup>

It is not what “we” do for “them,” but an opportunity for all of us to be enveloped in God’s grace and mercy. In God’s economy, it’s less clear who is donor and who is recipient because all are blessed when needs are met and when individuals receive care.<sup>32</sup>

In “mission” we believe that our task is to meet the needs of the neighborhood, but in “friendship” those assumptions are rearranged.<sup>33</sup> “In friendship, the other person is not seen as a project or needy recipient but as a fellow traveler.”<sup>34</sup> In friendship, we listen to avoid being manipulative and to avoid being misinformed.<sup>35</sup> Our presence in the neighborhood and the presence of the neighborhood residents in our church force us to acknowledge the power and opportunities that we have and to consider ways to share.<sup>36</sup> That presence forces us to see our own need for reconciliation and redemption.<sup>37</sup> That presence forces us to seek the image of God in all of humanity.<sup>38</sup> Our involvement should be a 2-way sharing of skills. We should encourage empowerment of neighborhood people to lead the projects, and the people in the neighborhood should be encouraged to share their gifts with us. The learning of new skills should work both ways.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Phol, *Friendship at the Margins* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 33.

Appendix 12.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>39</sup> “Minutes,” October 1, 2012. Appendix 16.

- “True success is defined by our ‘faithfulness to the neighborhood.’”<sup>40</sup>

Our success can be counted quantitatively through such efforts as numbers of houses built or rehabbed, numbers of Northminster members involved in the neighborhood, numbers of kids receiving (or having received) tutoring, and a committee structure that has grown exponentially over the years. However, faithfulness to the neighborhood is evidenced by a 5 year plan moving into its 15th year. The community trusts Jill Buckley to maintain the keys to the Yellow Church. Members of Northminster are recognized by neighborhood residents and welcomed on the streets, the park, and the Yellow Church. The children of MidCity have participated in Children's Bible Camp at Northminster since 2009. Without solicitation, the Wider Net designated fund has continued to receive contributions. After community meetings, the churches in the area called for conversation and partnership in work and worship. Although unwilling to take Northminster seriously in 2011,<sup>41</sup> in 2013, the churches considered Northminster a part of the future of the neighborhood. Chuck Poole called this a “decadal change” in the perception of Northminster in the eyes of the community churches.<sup>42</sup>

#### LISTENING TO OUR CHURCH:

Theological discussion was followed by a period of listening. The committee began by listening to the Senior Pastor, Chuck Poole, and the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry, Jill Buckley. Next, the committee listened to the church committees which have had the most contact with MidCity/Georgetown – the Wider Net Ministries Committee, the Children's Ministries Committee, and the Youth Committee. Each committee was given a guideline for discussion, and each committee was asked to report to the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee.

Because Jill Buckley, Associate Pastor for Community Ministry, was an active participant in the work of this committee, the committee was in a position to listen throughout this process to the thoughts, concerns, suggestions, hopes, and dreams, from the one person who is most closely enveloped in the relationships being formed between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown. She provided the committee with census information for MidCity/Georgetown,<sup>43</sup> and she was instrumental in assisting with the creation of the “Wider Net Missions

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<sup>40</sup> Heuertz, 34. Appendix 12.

<sup>41</sup> See Wider Net Sub-Committee notes from meetings with Community Partners. Appendix 8.

<sup>42</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Minutes,” December 9, 2013. Appendix 16.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix 17.

Timeline” which forms a synopsis of the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown. <sup>44</sup>

From the beginning of our discussions, Jill Buckley emphasized, “Northminster needs to have a physical presence in the neighborhood through ownership.”<sup>45</sup> She stated the following in relation to the concept of ownership:

- ≈ There are different levels of investment or engagement, and Northminster would be considered an equal partner from a neighborhood perspective.
- ≈ Theologically, ownership would create an incarnational presence, making the statement, “We are here to stay.”
- ≈ The space chosen should be a place neutral enough for all types of uses.
- ≈ The space should provide hospitality for life needs – celebration and grief. Northminster has a gift for hospitality.
- ≈ There are neighborhood churches, but not everyone is a member of the neighborhood churches.
- ≈ The space should be available for community events including skills training or job training.
- ≈ The space should involve a kitchen.
- ≈ The space should not be located on Bailey Avenue, but the space should be embedded in the neighborhood.
- ≈ The space should not be a social service agency.
- ≈ The space should look like a house or blend in with the neighborhood.
- ≈ Ideas for the space include renewing the existing Yellow Church or another old building in the neighborhood or purchasing an available lot(s) such as the one on the corner across from the park.
- ≈ Even if the decision is made to build or renew another building, Northminster should still continue to operate the Yellow Church.
- ≈ Northminster should inquire of community partners to determine what space and where a space is needed.
- ≈ The space should still be a modest physical presence.

In addition, Jill Buckley stated her belief that Northminster’s focus should continue to be on children under the age of 18, after school and during the summer. In support of this belief, she stated the following:

- ≈ Northminster already has energy for children and the gifts of hospitality and physical labor.
- ≈ Operation Shoestring is limited in both space and funding.

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<sup>44</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>45</sup> “Minutes,” October 1, 2012. Appendix 16.

- ≈ One possibility could be a partnership with churches for a neighborhood summer camp.
  - The camp would include lunch programs.
  - The neighborhood teenagers could be hired as counselors.
  - Teenagers would then receive training for leading and caring for others.
  - This would be a larger version of Yellow Church Summer Camp.

Next, in November 2012, the committee received a report from the Wider Net Ministries Committee.<sup>46</sup> The fundamental recommendation from the Wider Net Ministries Committee was “to build on the activities that are already working rather than looking for new activities.”<sup>47</sup> In addition, the committee recommended the following:

- ≈ Northminster should have ownership in the neighborhood.
  - The purpose would be to host classes which meet the needs identified by the neighborhood.
  - The purpose would be to make connections, especially with the neighborhoods associated with MidTown Partners.
  - The purpose would be to house the kids’ camp and tutoring that Northminster has started.
- ≈ Northminster should continue with plans to help with repairs in the neighborhood.
- ≈ Northminster should continue with the children's programming which is currently ongoing.
  - After School Program
  - Yellow Church Summer Camp program

The next committee report came from the Youth Committee in February 2013.<sup>48</sup> The report began with a list of the activities involving both MidCity/Georgetown and Northminster Youth. At the time of the report, the primary youth activities in MidCity/Georgetown were:

- ≈ Wonderful Wednesdays – The youth led kids from MidCity in various summer activities including a trip to the Mississippi Children’s Museum and a tour of the Capitol. The Youth participated in 2 of the 6 Wednesdays, and they participated from 7:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The ratio of participation was approximately 2 Youth to 5 MidCity children. The

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<sup>46</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Minutes,” November 5, 2012. Appendix 16.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Minutes,” February 4, 2013. Appendix 16.

Wonderful Wednesdays involved an activity, lunch, a snack, and swimming.

- ≈ Back-to School Celebration – The Youth Committee in conjunction with the Wider Net Committee set up this celebration in the park. There were 5 or 6 “stations” that the children had to visit, have their “report card” stamped, and participate in school related activities. With a full report card, they would pick up a backpack full of school supplies. This celebration was supervised by Northminster families, and MidCity families attended.

At the time of the report, several youth from the Wider Net area also participated in the life of the youth group. They participated in Sunday night activities, Wednesday night activities, Sunday school, worship, and in-town service projects such as serving lunch at Stewpot. They went on weekend retreats, attended week-long Passport Camps in NC, went on the annual Mystery Trip, and went on a special ski trip to Colorado that the youth group only does every two or three years. The sum of these activities represented a huge commitment on the part of the MidCity/Georgetown youth, their families, Wider Net, and Northminster's youth ministry. The youth themselves often arranged their own transportation, would get forms signed, and volunteered on weekends to raise money for the more costly trips. Their parents were supportive and helpful in getting the appropriate permission, necessities for the trip, and providing some essential support as they trusted Northminster to welcome and minister to and with their children. Northminster and its members covered the majority of costs, provided hours of transportation each week, and did the extra work necessary to connect the dots so that the experiences of the youth from MidCity/Georgetown would be as equitable as possible to that of any youth who was a member of Northminster. This included everything from providing cash for travel money on trips to helping purchase “Dirty Santa” gifts for the youth Christmas party. As a group, they worshiped together, learned together, read the Bible together, played together, served together, traveled together, and roomed together.

While the youth committee celebrated that a group of youth from MidCity/Georgetown were fully immersed in the life of the Northminster youth group at that time, there were also some members of the committee who expressed strong concern over the possibility of a much larger group of youth from the Wider Net area joining the Northminster youth group. Many felt that we should not bring in so many MidCity/Georgetown youth that they would outnumber the youth who were members of Northminster at any or all Northminster youth events. There were fears that such a shift would change the

culture of youth events, orienting the teaching and behavioral expectations around a group that would not be representative of Northminster membership. For cultural and practical reasons, the youth committee supported the idea that involvement of youth from MidCity/Georgetown in Northminster youth activities should be connected to personal relationships with Northminster members (sometimes referred to as “God-parents”), which means that practical things (the most relevant being transportation to and from events) should revolve around personal relationships between the youth and their friends at Northminster as opposed to an institutional transportation system wherein a much larger group of youth from MidCity/Georgetown would be brought in through a volunteer-driving network without specific adults taking responsibility for each child in the way other adults take responsibility for Northminster youth and other guests at Northminster youth events.

At that time, the Youth Committee expressed an interest in remaining involved with the MidCity neighborhood. First and foremost, they desired to continue to cultivate the relationships they had with the MidCity youth who had become so deeply integrated into their lives by continuing to support their participation in any and all Northminster youth events. They were also interested in continuing service projects in the Wider Net area, such as Wonderful Wednesdays and cleanup days. However, when asked about bringing a large group of youth from MidCity/Georgetown to Northminster, the youth committee did not desire to host such an event. On the one hand, such feelings reflected tensions around the Northminster youth group's limited ability to welcome a large group of youth from MidCity and the Gospel concessions that come with such limitations as expressed above. On the other hand, the Northminster youth committee does not have a history of hosting any events at Northminster around visitors from any neighborhood where they intend to have more guests than members. The youth committee expressed an interest in finding other activities similar to the Stewminster basketball team, wherein the youth from Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown would be able to maintain a more symmetrical relationship at a neutral site around an activity that required teamwork and was a common interest among many of the youth.

The Youth Committee noted that successful activities for Northminster families have the following characteristics:

- ≈ an individual child makes the commitment to Northminster through participation in activities and consistency in attendance;
- ≈ a specific mission project is planned and accomplished in the MidCity neighborhood; or

≈ a joint endeavor such as “Stewminster” basketball.

According to the Associate Pastor for Youth in 2015: Since the time of that report in 2013, several youth from MidCity/Georgetown have continued to deepen their involvement and commitment to Northminster. They participate in Sunday night events, Wednesday night events, Sunday School, in-town service projects, and worship. Several attend our retreats and week-long Passport Camp trips. One went on a major mission trip to New York City, and several went on the youth group’s first big trip to Universal Studios in Orlando, FL. One youth was also baptized into the church, becoming a full member of Northminster. Their transition to the youth group from the tutoring program and children’s program has been eased through their participation in the Northminster Mentor Program for 6<sup>th</sup> graders. The youth committee has worked with Wider Net to find ways to continue to jointly fund their participation in any and all youth activities in which they desire to participate.

Prior to the report from the Children’s Ministries Committee, Jill Buckley provided background information regarding the relationship between MidCity/Georgetown children and Northminster children.<sup>49</sup> She explained that in 2009, in an effort to live out “within our walls” our church’s commitment to MidCity/Georgetown, the Northminster Children’s Bible Camp Committee decided to invite MidCity kids instead of Stewpot kids to attend Bible Camp. (In so doing, the Children’s Bible Camp committee was also hoping that a reduced number of visiting children would ease the workload on Bible Camp volunteers. At that time, approximately 70-90 children from Stewpot’s summer program had been attending Bible Camp annually.) After their participation in Children’s Bible Camp, 2 or 3 children from the After School Program began asking to come from tutoring at the Yellow Church to Wednesday night suppers. In the beginning, this included 2 children and 1 youth on a regular basis. Other children also wanted to come, but Jill would only allow as many to come as she had seatbelts in her car. So, in the fall of 2010, after conversation with the pastors, with the chair of the Children’s Ministries Committee and with several of the Wednesday night teachers, Jill began arranging transportation for all children from MidCity/Georgetown who wished to attend Wednesday night activities.

Soon, the number of children from MidCity attending Wednesday night suppers equaled or exceeded the number of children attending whose families were members of Northminster. On one Wednesday night there were 24 MidCity

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

children – significantly more children from MidCity than from Northminster. Soon it became clear that the variance of Biblical knowledge among the children changed the way the curriculum for Wednesday night needed to be presented, and the imbalance in numbers changed the way behavior needed to be managed. (At the same time, approximately 2 MidCity children were regularly attending Atrium on Sunday nights. In addition, 1-2 MidCity children participated in the 6th Grade Mentor Program and at least 3 children had approached the pastoral staff about baptism and church membership at Northminster).

Several changes occurred to address the stress caused by the imbalance in numbers of children from MidCity and Northminster on Wednesday nights. Volunteers were informed of the challenges when recruited, and training was implemented to help volunteers address behavioral needs. Wednesday night children's programming was restructured to help make it more broadly accessible to all children in attendance. Girls of Grace and Guys of Grace were moved to Sunday nights. All of the pastoral staff assisted in recruitment and training of volunteers, including Wednesday night "godparents," who sat with the children at supper, assisted with discipline, and helped with transportation.

Even with these changes, the imbalance continued to be a challenge. After much discussion both within and between the Wider Net Ministries Committee and the Children's Ministries Committee, in the fall of 2012, Wednesday evening children's programming was suspended. Instead of leaving after supper for separate activities, children remained upstairs for Wednesday night worship. The pastors accommodated the presence of the children by implementing a discussion-style meditation intended to engage all ages. Transportation was also de-institutionalized at this time. No longer did Jill recruit Wednesday night godparents for all children who wished to attend; children from MidCity/Georgetown were brought to Wednesday night suppers by adults with whom they had established relationships and who initiated and organized transportation. As a result, fewer children from MidCity attended (10-12, of which 1-2 were youth).

According to the Associate Pastor for Community Minister in 2015: At the time of this report, 3 youth from MidCity have been baptized at Northminster, two of whom began attending Wednesday night suppers at this time. The family of one of these youth has joined Northminster and now, as an adult, his child was recently dedicated. Also, at the time of this report, 6 children and two teenagers from MidCity attend Wednesday Night Supper on a semi-regular basis; 5 children have participated in the 6th Grade Mentor Program; and 2

children and 2 teenagers from MidCity attend Sunday School when they can arrange transportation.

In March of 2013, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee listened to a report from the Children's Ministries Committee.<sup>50</sup>

The Children's Committee began by noting that the Children's Bible Camp Committee decided to invite MidCity children from Summer Kids' Club rather than children from Stewpot in order to further the relationship with the children in our Wider Net area. They also hoped these relationships would help in recruiting leaders for Children's Bible Camp.

Although the committee affirmed tutoring at the Yellow Church and the participation of children from MidCity in Bible Camp, when the invitation to come to Northminster shifted from Bible Camp to Wednesday nights, the committee felt that there was not enough preparation. Some committee members voiced the opinion that it was a good idea to have children from MidCity come to Northminster, but that Northminster was not ready for the ways that this changed children's programming. The committee members noted that they wanted Northminster to be a sanctuary for their children, who are being stretched in other places (such as their schools), to live out gospel hospitality. Additionally, the committee noted that some of the volunteers were already out of their comfort zone in teaching, and the additional challenges created by an imbalance in numbers adding to that stress.

The committee also affirmed "godparents" as an idea that worked. The Committee recommended increasing the interaction between Northminster *families* and MidCity/Georgetown *families*. The Children's Committee also suggested that Northminster could encourage the building of relationships in other activities (like play dates). However, the children from MidCity/Georgetown would still need to be accompanied, either by their parents or by Northminster "godparents."

The committee reported that some believed that the relationship with MidCity/Georgetown was a church-wide initiative that had fallen primarily on the shoulders of the Children's Ministries Committee; however, individuals had signed up to participate on the Children's Committee to plan and implement activities for Northminster children. Though they were willing to include children from MidCity, the committee felt that the number of children present on

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<sup>50</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, "Minutes," March 4, 2013. Appendix 16.

Wednesday nights had changed the dynamic so that the needs of children whose families attended Northminster were not being met.

According to the Associate Pastor for Children in 2016: For at least one year after the changes were made to Wednesday nights, the numbers of children from MidCity who were present for any activities at Northminster was very small. In 2014 and 2015, a few children attended 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday School with transportation provided by a “god-parent.” One 6<sup>th</sup> grader from MidCity participated in the 2014 Mentor Program and three participated in the 2015 Mentor Program. Interactions with the potential for friendship have begun to take place in these contexts.

The tensions around Wednesday night children’s programming helped us to acknowledge two cultural shifts that are shaping Children’s Ministries. First, the ability of young families to participate in both Wednesday and Sunday night activities is decreasing as extracurricular activities become increasingly available for younger ages. Letting go of Wednesday evening children’s programming has created a more vibrant, well attended Sunday, as families find committing to one night more reasonable. Additionally, the new format for Wednesday night suppers means that families can spend time with one another and the family of faith without the children being removed for separate programming.

The second cultural shift that we have acknowledged is that our church family no longer lives in a centralized location. This is important for children’s ministries because it means that the children no longer go to school together or play in the neighborhood together. That the children did not know each other well became evident when a large group of children from MidCity (children who do know each other well), began coming to the church. The Children’s Ministries committee has worked diligently to create space for relationship building amongst the children (for example: playdates, Girls’ Book Group, Guys’ Game Day). These opportunities have been well received and have created deeper relationships among the children. In 2016, the Children’s Ministries and the Wider Net Ministries committees planned a Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Day, providing an opportunity for the children to learn and serve together. This was well received by all involved, and there is hope that we can build on this in the future, creating space for relationships among all the children, and building opportunities for learning and serving out of those relationships.

## LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITY:

After listening to the church, the committee listened to the community. The committee was provided with the reports from the Wider Net Sub-Committee of the Local & Direct Missions Committee regarding conversations with the following community partners: Operation Shoestring, True Vine Missionary Baptist Church, Crestwood Church, Mission First, Habitat for Humanity, Wells United Methodist Church, MidTown Parnters, MidCity Neighborhood Association, and His Heart Ministries.<sup>51</sup> In June, July, and August of 2013, the committee organized socials at the Yellow Church. The community was asked to engage in discussion and to dream about their community. Discussions were guided by Jill Buckley. In August, the committee also held a meeting of community partners in the Yellow Church. The community partners were asked to engage in discussion and to dream about working together as a community.

Two meetings were held with invitations to the MidCity community and members of the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee and the Wider Net Ministries Committee. In attendance at the first meeting were 36 people of which 8 were from Northminster.<sup>52</sup> In attendance at the second meeting were 37 people of which 8 were from Northminster.<sup>53</sup> Conversations began by asking the MidCity community to discuss “God’s Dream for the Neighborhood.”<sup>54</sup> The following comments were made:

- ≈ This neighborhood as an example for other neighborhoods – as an example of things getting better. (It is not impossible for things to get better).
- ≈ Everybody comes together and works together.
- ≈ Kids to know about the Bible and Jesus.
- ≈ Seek ye first – possess in our hearts not just in our lips – live holy lives.
- ≈ Community support parents in the work of teaching children about God.
- ≈ The children belong to everyone, and everyone looks out for the children and teens.
- ≈ Treat each other like family.
- ≈ Peaceful
- ≈ Safety – kids to grow up and people to grow old
- ≈ Drug free
- ≈ Respect each other

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<sup>51</sup> See Appendix 8.

<sup>52</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Minutes from MidCity Social,” June 30, 2013. Appendix 16.

<sup>53</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Minutes from MidCity Social,” July 21, 2013. Appendix 16.

<sup>54</sup> “Minutes from MidCity Social,” June 30, 2013. Appendix 16.

- ≈ No reckless driving
- ≈ No hunger

The discussion continued around the idea of the “Neighborhood Dream.”<sup>55</sup> The following comments were made:

- ≈ Speed bumps
- ≈ No litter
- ≈ Parents watching kids walk to and from school
- ≈ Recreation center (classes and activities)
- ≈ Kids walking home without fighting. Kids don’t think adults can correct them. Parents need to come together to agree that others can correct their kids.
- ≈ Everyone participate in neighborhood watch.
- ≈ Police work with us, not against us. Police tell who made the call.
- ≈ Free pool, theaters, arcade, pool table.
- ≈ Transportation for children to get out of the neighborhood.
- ≈ Teamwork – start within the neighborhood. We are talkin’ the talk, but we need to be walkin’ the walk.

Because the discussion of God’s Dream and the Neighborhood Dream were both centered on safety and children, the MidCity community was asked for examples of how they see the creation of a safe place for kids.<sup>56</sup> The following comments were made:

- ≈ Church
- ≈ Recreation center
- ≈ Neighbor’s house
- ≈ Lighting
- ≈ Speed bumps
- ≈ Police patrol
- ≈ Supervision
- ≈ Education
- ≈ Sidewalks

Because of the community’s interest in a recreation center and this committee’s discussions involving a permanent sense of place, the MidCity community was

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> “Minutes from MidCity Social,” July 21, 2013. Appendix 16.

asked what they would want in a recreation center.<sup>57</sup> The following comments were made:

- ≈ Learning about
  - Godly things
  - Respect
  - Bible class
  - Everyday life
    - . Responsibility for self and others
    - . Getting along with others
- ≈ Swing set
- ≈ Doesn't have to be in the park or near the park
- ≈ Basketball
- ≈ Field trips
- ≈ Counseling
- ≈ Academics
- ≈ Exercise
- ≈ Job searches
- ≈ Snacks (healthy)
- ≈ Job training
- ≈ Life skills
  - Appropriate attire
  - Behavior

To further define community expectations, the MidCity community was asked to describe what was meant by "something constructive for kids besides sports."<sup>58</sup> The following comments were made:

- ≈ Drama class
- ≈ Arts and crafts
- ≈ Trade skills (apprentice)
- ≈ Cleaning community
- ≈ Learning
- ≈ Gardening
- ≈ Cooking
- ≈ Hunting / fishing
- ≈ Camping
- ≈ Sewing
- ≈ Singing

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

As a part of listening to the community, the committee organized a meeting of community partners to discuss their hopes and plans for the neighborhood. At this meeting, 23 people were present representing 10 different community partners.<sup>59</sup> The individuals present were as follows:

- ≈ Chuck Poole, Senior Pastor of Northminster Baptist Church
- ≈ Jill Buckley, Associate Pastor for Community Ministry of Northminster
- ≈ Holly Wiggs, Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee of Northminster
- ≈ Kane Ditto, Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee of Northminster
- ≈ Donna Barksdale, Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee of Northminster
- ≈ Jim Johnston, Wider Net Ministries Committee of Northminster
- ≈ Cindy Griffin, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity, Wider Net Ministries Committee and Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee of Northminster
- ≈ Debra Brent, President of the MidCity Neighborhood
- ≈ Claude Tucker, Sr., Pastor of True Vine MB Church
- ≈ Horace Kelly, member of True Vine MB Church and neighborhood resident
- ≈ Ezra Snell, Pastor at Mt. Wade MB Church
- ≈ Minister Alpha Barnes, Minister at Greater Mt. Sinai MB Church
- ≈ Olivia Barnes, member of Greater Mt. Sinai MB Church
- ≈ A.L. Barnes, Pastor of Greater Mt. Sinai MB Church
- ≈ Bobby Johnson, member of Greater Mt. Sinai MB Church
- ≈ Nitina Campbell, Teacher at Galloway Elementary School
- ≈ Robert Langford, Executive Director at Operation Shoestring
- ≈ Katherine Crowley, Caseworker, Operation Shoestring
- ≈ Amber May, Programs Director, Operation Shoestring
- ≈ Todd Watson, Associate Pastor of Wells Church
- ≈ Justin White, Youth/Education Minister of Wells Church
- ≈ Erica Reed, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation
- ≈ Primus Wheeler, Exec Director of Jackson Medical Mall Foundation

These community partners were asked to discuss their hopes for the neighborhood.<sup>60</sup> The following comments were made:

- ≈ Operation Shoestring to be responsive to the needs of the community;
- ≈ Concerns for public safety, harmony among neighbors, and elimination of substandard housing;
- ≈ Neighborhood to come together and turn itself around;
- ≈ Community to be drug-free and building more Habitat houses;

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<sup>59</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, "Minutes from MidCity Partners Meeting," August 14, 2013. Appendix 16.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

- ≈ Operation Shoestring to continue to work with schools to improve education;
- ≈ Removal of blight from rundown houses in order to create a safer neighborhood;
- ≈ More training and education activities for young people;
- ≈ More options for youth;
- ≈ Jackson Medical Mall Foundation continue to provide healthcare for the underserved and for continued economic development;
- ≈ Importance of working together.

A final listening opportunity came from a joint gathering of the neighborhood residents and the community partners.<sup>61</sup> In looking to the future, the group was asked to imagine a possible future. The group made the following predictions:

- ≈ The park is safer; we used the park more and know one another better.
- ≈ We got rid of dilapidated buildings and cut back trees for improved lighting.
- ≈ Speed bumps have been installed.
- ≈ We found a place for a recreation center.
- ≈ We have six more gardens.
- ≈ Younger people are cooking for the elderly.
- ≈ People started coming together for cookouts, etc.
- ≈ There is a group of people who cut grass and maintain the homes of elderly people.

However, in considering the present, the group made the following observations:

- ≈ Litter
- ≈ Shootings at the park
- ≈ Strangers at the park
- ≈ Abandoned houses, buildings
- ≈ Dumped garbage on abandoned lots
- ≈ Overgrown lots

In order to move from the present to the possible future, the group identified the following strengths needed to pursue that possible future:

- ≈ "We"
- ≈ Sacrifice

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<sup>61</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, "Minutes from MidCity Social," August 26, 2013. Appendix 16.

- ≈ Trust
- ≈ Integrity
- ≈ Loyalty
- ≈ Mutual support
- ≈ Commitment
- ≈ Perseverance
- ≈ Respect
- ≈ Hope
- ≈ Consistency
- ≈ Dependability

The group was then asked what “first steps” they were willing to take to make this possible future become a reality.<sup>62</sup> The following comments were made:

- ≈ Volunteering at and participating in National Night Out on October 1
- ≈ Boarding up houses on our own
- ≈ Attending the city's Speed Bumps hearing on September 17
- ≈ Asking Mrs. Brent to call the owners of the lot on Bell and Fortification for clearing
- ≈ Contributing money toward the Teen Center

After these meetings, Pastor Tucker of True Vine MB Church expressed his concern to Jill Buckley that True Vine had a vision to build a youth center, but they were concerned that Northminster would move faster than they were able. Pastor Tucker called a meeting of the area pastors, including the pastors of Northminster Baptist Church.<sup>63</sup> Present at the meeting were Pastor Tucker, Ezra Snell of Mt. Wade, Chuck Poole, and Jill Buckley. The group determined that they wanted to work together, and a suggestion was made to begin by regularly worshipping together.

Finally, as one of our community partners, Habitat for Humanity gave the committee information regarding evidence of the quality of life improvements from 2008 to 2014 in the MidCity neighborhood.<sup>64</sup> Habitat noted the following most notable and significant improvements:

- ≈ Reduction of blighted properties. Physical improvements in housing stock are occurring through both new construction and repairs.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> “Minutes,” December 9, 2013. Appendix 16.

<sup>64</sup> Habitat for Humanity, “What Does the Data Say?: Evidence of Quality of Life Improvements through Affordable Housing, MidCity, Jackson, Mississippi, from 2008 to 2014,” 2014. Appendix 18.

- ≈ Neighborhood safety through reduced crime. The gang activity along Wood Street is eliminated. Younger families with children are moving into the neighborhood.
- ≈ Increased awareness and participation in the neighborhood association. Residents are confident in their ability to enact future changes that better their lives and the neighborhood.
- ≈ Increased positive police presence and swifter responses to MidCity. The community is less afraid of reprisals due to the building of trusting relationships between residents and Jackson police officers and Hinds County sheriff deputies, along with their increased presence.
- ≈ Increased resident pride and higher neighborhood satisfaction among residents. Local residents have increased their upkeep of properties, as well as neighborhood abandoned lot clean ups. Also evident is the perception as well as the fact among residents that home values have increased.
- ≈ Resident sense of community and cohesion. Residents look out for each other, and the older and younger generations communicate more.

Based on the data collected by Habitat in two resident satisfaction surveys six years apart, the following suggestions and needs regarding future development in the area were identified by the residents:

- ≈ More employment opportunities
- ≈ More vibrant retail corridors
- ≈ More help with the City of Jackson to support MidCity with additional resources and infrastructure
- ≈ More programs for the youth
- ≈ More interactions with police and continue neighborhood watch programs
- ≈ Additional lighting around the park and deter illegal “gambling”
- ≈ Reduce crime against property (burglary)
- ≈ Leadership development training for neighborhood leaders

Habitat for Humanity made the following suggestions for the future:

- ≈ Address additional challenges such as lack of economic development, jobs, and amenities;
- ≈ Make known the improvements in MidCity;
- ≈ Develop methods to leverage this success with local officials and to promote the neighborhood revitalization work to attract market-rate housing and business investments.

## CONSIDERING ORGANIZATION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD:

Part of the charge of the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee included consideration of community organization. This charge was first mentioned by the Wider Net Ad Hoc Review Committee in 2009. In 2014, the committee researched various forms of organization and spoke with community leaders regarding these forms of organization. The following organizational frameworks were considered:

- CDC (Community Development Corporation)
- Working Together Jackson
- Partnerships with Churches and Organizations
- Mission First Model of 501(c)(3)
- Joint Committee of Northminster and Neighborhood
- Neighborhood Director
- Limited 501(c)(3)

In reference to a CDC, the committee began by talking with Kane Ditto, previous Mayor the City of Jackson, Northminster member and Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee member.<sup>65</sup> A CDC is an organization that the community “buys” into. The community is a part of the decision making process as well as the implementation of plans. An example would be the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation or MidTown Partners. A successful CDC requires an Executive Director and a functioning board as well as identification of a specific geographical area. The board usually consists of 9-15 members with 6-7 of those members being community members. The remaining members come from outside the community. The Executive Director and usually one staff person would require a salary. The operating budget is usually \$150,000.00 per year. The Executive Director serves as the liaison between the city and the neighborhood when attempting to secure funding for projects. A successful CDC needs community partners willing to commit to 5 years of funding. In addition, the CDC needs a “champion” willing to raise money. This would require a 5 year vision to support the “ask”. This “business plan” could be created by a consultant. The CDC identifies 3 priorities as a focus. Rather than create a CDC, another option would be to annex MidCity into the existing MidTown CDC.

Next, the committee talked with Marcie Skelton of the MidTown Partners CDC.<sup>66</sup> The CDC was formed in 1994 using \$600,000.00 raised through BINGO.

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<sup>65</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Notes,” November 2013. Appendix 16.

<sup>66</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Notes,” February 27, 2014. Appendix 16.

The CDC employs 40 individuals. There were 5 churches in the neighborhood with no success in forming a partnership. A board was formed with community residents and community stakeholders with board experience. The intention was to create and encourage leadership. The CDC includes: 4 residents, the Walker Foundation, Johnathan Lee, Whit Hughes, Baptist Medical Center, Millsaps College (David Culpepper and Pat Taylor), and Trustmark (Stephanie Jenkins). The end results planned for the neighborhood are determined by the board using focus groups as the moral compass. Schools are the top priority. They also have Excell by 5 (an early childhood initiative). They support a primary care clinic in the schools. They support the Medical Mall Foundation. Marcie Skelton indicated that the primary problem facing the CDC is that in training leaders for the community, the CDC is bound to accept the leadership once asserted.

The committee made the following findings regarding a CDC:

- A CDC appears to be a top-down approach to management whereas Northminster relationships have been more organic (down-up).<sup>67</sup>
- There should be distinctions between our actions as a church and those of another type of institution.<sup>68</sup> As a church, our responsibility to the voice of the community is different from that of other organizations.
- Instigation of a CDC is not the appropriate method of organization for the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to a CDC, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee considered participating in Working Together Jackson as a way of working with the community. The committee heard from Mike Roberts of Working Together Jackson and attended a meeting of the organization.<sup>70</sup> Working Together Jackson develops leaders in the community institutions. Organization begins relationally with house meetings. During these meetings, individuals have 90 seconds to answer 2 questions: 1) Name one thing you want to work on and why; 2) What makes you care. These questions are used to understand the motivation behind the individuals. Mike Roberts stated that partnering across racial lines requires trust through relational connections which requires an understanding of the “why”. In order to train leadership in the neighborhood, the group needs strategic action. The idea is “citizen schools” teaching neighbors how to interact civically – civic engagement.

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<sup>67</sup> “Minutes,” December 9, 2013. Appendix 16.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Minutes,” March 29, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>70</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Notes,” April 29, 2014. Appendix 16.

Mike Roberts stated that MidCity needs leaders. He believes that its internal institutions are failing and that churches in the neighborhood need to take a lead and come together. He stated that the neighborhood association needs revival, and he recommended that the Hinds County Tax Roll be used to call on house owners.

After talking with Mike Roberts and attending a meeting of Working Together Jackson, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee made the following findings regarding Working Together Jackson:

- Joining this organization would require approval of the Wider Net Ministries committee and the Local & Direct Missions committee followed by a general membership vote.<sup>71</sup>
- This organization provides advocacy through legislation and support of various political agendas which are inconsistent with our beliefs regarding our role as a church.<sup>72</sup>
- Joining Working Together Jackson is not the appropriate method of organization for the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>73</sup>

The committee also discussed partnership with other churches and organizations. The 1998 Long Range Planning Committee Report recommended work “in partnership with institutions (religious and otherwise) currently involved in the area.”<sup>74</sup> In addition, the Wider Net proposal specifically called for partnering with Habitat for Humanity.<sup>75</sup> The proposal also called for ongoing communication with associations and businesses in the neighborhood as well as the statement, “Partner and coordinate with existing churches and agencies performing ministries in the neighborhood.”<sup>76</sup> In light of these guidelines, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee made the following finding regarding partnerships:

- Northminster has already established relationships with Wells United Methodist Church, Operation Shoestring, and Habitat for Humanity.
- Based on the inclusion of Northminster in the meeting among the neighborhood churches regarding a community center, Northminster is

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> “Minutes,” March 29, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>74</sup> Williams. Appendix 4.

<sup>75</sup> “A Wider Net.” Appendix 5.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

beginning to see partnership opportunities with other neighborhood churches.

- o Partnerships with churches and businesses already present in the area would enhance the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>77</sup>

The committee considered the Mission First Model for the continuation of the relationship with MidCity/Georgetown. This model involves the creation of a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation which hires personnel and oversees acts of ministry within the neighborhood. After discussion, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee made the following finding regarding a Mission First Model of organization:

- o This model takes the relationship out of the church and places it in the hands of a separate 501(c)(3) entity.<sup>78</sup>
- o This model represents a “working for” model of engagement.<sup>79</sup>
- o Creation of a 501(c)(3) based on the Mission First Model is not the appropriate method of organization for the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>80</sup>

The committee considered establishment of a joint committee or board.<sup>81</sup> A portion of the members would be from Northminster, and a portion of the members would be from the neighborhood (residents and business/organizations). Together the committee would ascertain priorities for the community and determine an appropriate plan of action. This type of organization might be appropriate once we have established a permanent sense of place. In the future, the Wider Net Ministries Committee will be in the best position to determine the feasibility of this type of organization.

Along these same lines, the committee considered hiring a Neighborhood Director.<sup>82</sup> This person would ideally be a resident of the neighborhood which would require a significant investment in leadership training. With this concept there were too many questions regarding neighborhood politics associated with the decision making process due to the payment of a salary and the source for funding activities. This is not the type of relationship we would want to foster with the community.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> “Minutes,” March 29, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

In considering a “sense of place” as ownership of property in the neighborhood, the committee also briefly considered a limited 501(c)(3). Northminster would own the property, and the 501(c)(3) would lease the property from Northminster. The 501(c)(3) would pay for a staff position to administer the activities associated with the building and coordinate with other entities such as the City of Jackson and MidTown Partners. The 501(c)(3) would also create an avenue for requesting funding and grants that would not ordinarily be available to a church. However, in light of the fact that property ownership is not considered imminent, and in light of the fact that the relationship of Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown has been classified as organic, growing, and representing all models of engagement, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee determined that consideration of this limited model of a 501(c)(3) is premature even in considering a long range plan.<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, at this time, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee finds as follows:

- o The most effective means of “organizing” the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown is deemed to be that of friendship, of faithfulness to the neighborhood, of a permanent presence, and of further development of partnerships with churches and organizations already present within the community.<sup>85</sup>

#### CONCLUDING THE PROCESS:

In February of 2015, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee began the process of formulating recommendations for the long range plan regarding the relationship between Northminster Baptist Church and MidCity/Georgetown. The committee held retreat gatherings in February and March. The committee considered the reports from Habitat for Humanity regarding changes in the MidCity/Georgetown area since 2008.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the committee considered the financial implications of suggested recommendations. In an effort to organize and fully grasp the events that have transpired since 2001, the committee prepared a Timeline for A Wider Net.<sup>87</sup> The final meeting of the committee occurred June 1, 2015.

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<sup>84</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Minutes,” June 1, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>85</sup> “Minutes,” March 29, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>86</sup> See Habitat for Humanity Report, Appendix 18.

<sup>87</sup> See “Wider Net Missions Timeline”, Appendix 1.

## AFFIRMATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The affirmations and recommendations of this committee are made using the same framework as the original Wider Net proposal – a person, a place, and an initial act of ministry. These affirmations of the church's involvement in MidCity as well as these recommendations take into account the idea of the initial proposal, the reality of the relationship between Northminster Baptist Church and MidCity/Georgetown, and the future of that relationship. In summary:

We are called to be "A People."  
Our "sense of place" calls for ownership.  
We are called to maintain a "faithful presence."

### **A PERSON:**

#### **THE IDEA:**

The 1998 Long Range Planning Report referenced "church members":

To establish a planning committee to identify the opportunity for a deep and broad involvement in a particular neighborhood that could provide permanent programs in which *church members* would be active over a sustained period of time. [Emphasis added].<sup>88</sup>

In the Wider Net proposal, the Special Missions Project Committee recommended an "Associate Pastor for Community Ministry" as well as "opportunities for church members to minister to residents."<sup>89</sup> Specifically, the catalyst of the relationship between Northminster Baptist Church and MidCity/Georgetown was identified in the Wider Net proposal as "a person."<sup>90</sup>

#### **THE REALITY:**

In 2001, Northminster immediately began laying a foundation for a relationship with MidCity/Georgetown through partnerships with Operation Shoestring and Habitat for Humanity. During the summer months, Northminster members began providing breakfast and devotionals for Operation Shoestring Summer Camp, and in 2002, the church began paying for a summer youth intern at Operation Shoestring. Beginning in 2001, Northminster members

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<sup>88</sup> Williams. Appendix 4.

<sup>89</sup> "A Wider Net." Appendix 5.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

worked with Habitat for Humanity to purchase 20 lots and to build houses as well as to provide needed home repairs in the neighborhood. In 2003, Chuck Poole, Senior Pastor, began leading a Thursday morning Bible Class in the Yellow Church. Northminster members were in MidCity/Georgetown prior to 2004 when Northminster hired Jill Barnes Buckley as Associate Pastor for Community Ministry. According to Chuck Poole, Jill Buckley has become a “village priest” for the community, “filling a wide range of pastoral roles in the lives of residents in the Wider Net neighborhood.”<sup>91</sup> Therefore, relationships between Northminster members and members of the MidCity/Georgetown community began before the identification of “a person,” and those relationships have developed individually and organically over time.

Establishing credibility between the entity of Northminster Baptist Church and the MidCity/Georgetown community began through relationships with the organizations of Operation Shoestring and Habitat for Humanity. Credibility continued to grow through the consistent presence in the neighborhood of the Senior Pastor and the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry. In addition, various members of the church have become familiar faces in the neighborhood, especially through their continued involvement in programs such as tutoring, Bible Class, Yellow Church Summer Camp, home repairs, and lot maintenance. Those relationships have led to members of the MidCity/Georgetown community becoming members of the Northminster community through Wednesday night suppers, Youth programming, Children’s Bible Camp, and worship. 8 people who live in MidCity have joined our church, 3 of whom have been baptized here. According to the pastoral staff, over our nearly 15 year relationship, more than 400 Northminster members have been involved in some capacity in the MidCity/Georgetown area through Northminster’s efforts, and many Northminster members have experienced a significant connection to the residents of MidCity/Georgetown.

The structure through which Northminster members have planned and organized programs and activities in MidCity has changed over time. Eventually the growing relationship with MidCity/Georgetown required the establishment of a Wider Net Standing Committee to support the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown. This committee has continued to grow as the relationship with MidCity/Georgetown has grown. Beginning with 12 members, the committee has grown to 25 members. The committee now supports several standing sub-committees: College Savings, Home Repairs, After School Programs, Christmas Assistance, Transportation, and Lot Maintenance.

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<sup>91</sup> Poole. Appendix 11.

## **THE FUTURE: We are called to be “A People.”**

The relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown has grown since 2001 from organized activities in the neighborhood to include a relational experience with the neighborhood. While we should continue to provide “a person” (i.e., the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry), we have also become “a people.” In working toward the call to be “a people” with MidCity/Georgetown, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee makes the following affirmations and recommendations:

### **AFFIRMATIONS:**

- **Continue to employ an Associate Pastor for Community Ministry, a necessity in connecting our two communities.<sup>92</sup>**

The initial Wider Net proposal stated the responsibility of a community minister as “facilitating and coordinating opportunities for Northminster members to minister to residents in the neighborhood.”<sup>93</sup> In addition, the Community Minister Search Committee documents described the responsibilities to be as follows:

- ≈ Coordinating and facilitating Northminster's efforts to support and carry out programs of ministry in the Georgetown/MidCity neighborhood.
- ≈ Serving as a liaison to match up Northminster members and resources with community needs and activities.
- ≈ Working closely and cooperatively to coordinate Northminster's efforts in the neighborhood with other churches and agencies.
- ≈ Evaluating Northminster's ministry activities in the community on a regular basis so that the church might improve those programs which need improving, phase out those which do not prove effective, and determine which should be added.
- ≈ Performing other ministry activities (worship leadership, teaching, pastoral care, education) within Northminster as directed by its Senior Pastor and Deacons.<sup>94</sup>

Because Northminster is not located within the MidCity/Georgetown neighborhood, an official presence to serve as liaison between the two communities is a continued necessity. The relationship between the communities of Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown has grown beyond

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<sup>92</sup> Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, “Planning Retreat,” February 15, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>93</sup> “A Wider Net.” Appendix 5.

<sup>94</sup> Courtney E. Allen, “A Wider Net: Beyond the Walls and the Possibilities which Lie Before Us,” (Senior Project, Master of Divinity, Wake Forest University School of Divinity, 2010), 17. Appendix 15.

mere programming needs and beyond simple caregiving and support. As stated by Chuck Poole, the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry for Northminster has also become a “village priest” for MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>95</sup> In continuation of this relationship, there will be times when shepherding the flock will require the presence of a pastor. There will be times when experiencing the love of God and sharing that love outside of our immediate community and family of faith will require theological guidance and encouragement. There will be times when we will need to look to someone with a larger vision of community to encourage us to open our eyes, our arms, and our hearts. Northminster needs an Associate Pastor for Community Ministry who is dedicated to strengthening and expanding our relationship with MidCity/Georgetown both as a community of faith and as individuals. When the contract for employment was extended and when the salary of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry was placed in the general budget, the need for an Associate Pastor for Community Ministry became an accepted position of employment with the church. This committee is merely affirming the continued need for this position.

However, this affirmation does not preclude the presence of all of Northminster's pastoral staff in MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>96</sup> If we are to be “a people” with the MidCity/Georgetown community, then we cannot ask one pastor or one part of our Northminster community to represent us. If we are all called to be “a people,” our presence in the MidCity/Georgetown community must continue to include all of our pastoral staff. Examples of ways in which our pastors are currently present include Yellow Church children's activities (After School Program and Summer Camp), Back to School events, lot maintenance, home repairs, and Bible Class.

The presence of our pastoral staff in the MidCity/Georgetown neighborhood should be a known and encouraged aspect of their pastoral responsibilities. In that same vein, the responsibilities of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry should continue to include, “Performing other ministry activities (worship leadership, teaching, pastoral care, education) within Northminster as directed by its Senior Pastor and Deacons.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Poole. Appendix 11.

<sup>96</sup> “Planning Retreat.” Appendix 16.

<sup>97</sup> Poole. Appendix 11.

- **Continue to utilize our standing committee structure to organize people, resources, and events through the Wider Net Ministries Committee.<sup>98</sup>**

In 2011, when Wider Net activities were organized by a sub-committee of the Local & Direct Missions Committee, the sub-committee had 6 members. When the Wider Net Ministries Committee was formed as a standing committee in 2012, the committee had 12 members. The committee now has 25 members. As previously explained, the most effective means of “organizing” the relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown is deemed to be that of friendship, of faithfulness to the neighborhood, of a permanent presence, and of further development of partnerships with churches and organizations already present within the community.<sup>99</sup> For the foreseeable future, this can be accomplished through the continued guidance of the Wider Net Ministries Committee.

- **Continue to cultivate relationships between Northminster members and MidCity/Georgetown residents.**

We accept the challenge of the gospel to be hospitable to and to accept the hospitality of the people outside of our walls. This requires that we find ways to become comfortable with our presence in MidCity/Georgetown as well as comfortable with the presence of people from MidCity/Georgetown in our church building. “Unless our worlds are mutually accessible, all of the initiative is likely to come from one direction only. And unless a person has opportunities to offer friendship and gifts on his or her own turf, the relationship is unlikely to yield its most mature fruit.”<sup>100</sup>

However, we also must hear our church’s need for information and preparation. Although we are called to be “a people,” we are currently Northminster and MidCity. As noted in Courtney Allen’s senior project paper on the relationship between MidCity/Georgetown and Northminster, there are several tensions facing us as we seek to become a community. She references the tensions of economic differences, cultural differences, difficulty in negotiating boundaries, and the frustrations associated with slow change or apparent changelessness.<sup>101</sup> We are called to be God’s people; therefore, we should surround ourselves in the teachings of the Bible and patiently encourage each other in our spiritual growth. Examples which have been and continue to be encouragement include sermons, Bible Studies, Women’s Retreats that focus on hospitality, and inclusion of

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<sup>98</sup> “Planning Retreat.” Appendix 16.

<sup>99</sup> “Minutes,” March 29, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>100</sup> Heuertz, 80. Appendix 12.

<sup>101</sup> Allen, 65-68. Appendix 15.

MidCity/Georgetown children in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Mentoring Program, children's retreats, Children's Bible Camp, and youth activities.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

○ **Fund the Wider Net Ministries Committee fully through the Northminster general budget.**

- Funding through our general budget is a reflection of Northminster's commitment to the continuation of our relationship with MidCity/Georgetown.<sup>102</sup>

The funding of our presence in MidCity/Georgetown currently comes from a \$50,000 line item in the annual budget coupled with a fluctuating designated fund. Because Northminster has consistently approved of an annual budget that accurately reflects the priorities of the congregation, this practice should also be applied to how the church prioritizes our relationship with MidCity.<sup>103</sup> Rather than passively funding our relationship with MidCity/Georgetown through a designated fund, Northminster should actively fund this relationship through our annual budget.<sup>104</sup> The designated fund would then be used for expansion of programming, special projects, unexpected expenses, and unexpected building maintenance and repair.

- Northminster has a historical reference on which to plan the financial needs of future programming.<sup>105</sup>

Programs and activities have been ongoing in MidCity/Georgetown since 2001. As a result, the church has a history from which to judge the ongoing financial needs of successful programming. Although there are needs which are consistent from year to year, the Wider Net Ministries Committee has been funding some of these needs each year through the designated fund outside of the church's annual budget. This method of funding does not allow for adequate planning because the amount of money available in the designated fund cannot be anticipated. Although the line item for the Wider Net in the general budget has been \$50,000 since 2012, the committee has consistently spent more than \$50,000 using the designated fund to cover the difference. The amount

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> "Planning Retreat." Appendix 16.

<sup>104</sup> "Minutes," June 1, 2015. Appendix 16.

<sup>105</sup> See Appendix 20 with consolidated financial information for A Wider Net.

spent each year since 2012 when the Wider Net was folded into the Northminster general budget is indicated below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
2012	\$50,000	\$64,000
2013	\$50,000	\$114,000
2014	\$50,000	\$159,000
2015	\$50,000	\$68,000
2016	\$52,000	

- If the designated fund is to continue to be a significant source of funding for the Wider Net, then the Northminster membership should be made aware of the needs for funding.<sup>106</sup>

Currently, donations to the designated fund are not solicited. Without communicating to the Northminster membership, there is no understanding by the membership of the amount of funds needed or the use of the funds. This results in an inability to plan. Northminster is a generous congregation, and the designated fund has consistently held enough to cover expenses in the past. However, with the deepening of our commitment to MidCity/Georgetown, an understanding of the church's financial commitment would be beneficial to the work of the Wider Net Ministries Committee.

- The salary of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry should not be included in the discussions related to financial planning.

The salary of the other associate pastors or the senior pastor is not discussed in relation to the financial planning of the children's ministry or the youth ministry or adult ministries. When the salary of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry was placed in the general budget, it became an accepted position of employment with the church. Therefore, discussion of the salary is not related to the discussion for the vision of the Wider Net. That discussion is a discussion for the Long Range Planning Committee.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

## **A PLACE:**

### **THE IDEA:**

The original recommendation from the Special Missions Project Committee as a part of the Wider Net proposal was for a “physical presence in the neighborhood.”<sup>107</sup> In the original plan, \$70,000 was set aside to establish “a sense of place.”<sup>108</sup>

### **THE REALITY:**

Initially, the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry worked out of an office space provided by Operation Shoestring and located within their building on Bailey Avenue. Eventually, the location of office space within Operation Shoestring was determined to be illogical. The need for administrative assistance, the needs within the life of the Northminster community, and the small amount of time actually spent in the office when present in the MidCity community resulted in the decision to locate the official office of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry within the walls of Northminster Baptist Church.

The community center, located at 1622 Wood Street in the MidCity neighborhood, is now known throughout Northminster and the MidCity community as the “Yellow Church.” This place has become the unofficial office space of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry within the MidCity/Georgetown community. A property title issue exists in relation to the Yellow Church. The Yellow Church is actually owned by MidCity Community Association which is a defunct 501(c)(3) organization and which is separate and distinct from the MidCity Neighborhood Association. Horace Kelly, a MidCity resident, has been the acting owner of the Yellow Church since Northminster began relationships within the community. Northminster manages the Yellow Church by providing maintenance and repairs for the Yellow Church in exchange for rent-free use of the space. Cost of repairs and maintenance has been covered by the original designation of \$70,000 as set forth in the Wider Net proposal. Jill Barnes Buckley keeps the key to the building, and she is often the one called to lock and unlock the doors. In 2014, Horace Kelly offered “ownership” of the Yellow Church to True Vine Missionary Baptist Church. At this time, the issue of ownership remains undecided. The future availability of the Yellow Church to Northminster is unknown. At this time, Northminster continues to manage the building, and Jill Buckley continues to keep the key.

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<sup>107</sup> “A Wider Net.” Appendix 5.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

In 2014, Northminster received a special gift of \$100,000 to be used to establish Northminster's "sense of place" in MidCity/Georgetown. In addition, the Wider Net Ministries Committee has set aside \$5,500 from the Wider Net Designated Fund to be used to secure a "place" in light of the strong need the committee saw for a place. (This decision is to be reviewed annually). Therefore, at this time, Northminster maintains \$105,500 in designated funds to establish a "sense of place" in MidCity/Georgetown. This amount is separate and distinct from the Wider Net designated fund which finances the activities of the Wider Net Ministries Committee.

**THE FUTURE: Our "sense of place" calls for ownership.<sup>109</sup>**

The relationship between Northminster and MidCity/Georgetown has deepened since the original Wider Net proposal in 2001. We began our relationship as a church "working for" the community. Since that time, our relationship with the community has developed organically to include not only an organizational relationship with a community but also individual relationships between Northminster members and the residents of the community. Therefore, our relationships have expanded beyond the bounds of simply "working for" or even "working with" and include "being with" and "being for." Because of this expanded relationship, a "sense of place" is no longer satisfied with a temporary presence. Our faithful presence in the neighborhood calls for a "sense of place" that is permanent. Our "sense of place" now calls for ownership.

These affirmations and recommendations are based on the following findings:

- o Theologically, the church should listen to the community, work with the community, and be with the community as the community strives to attain their hopes and dreams.

In the original Wider Net proposal, the Special Missions Project Committee recommended "ongoing communication with residents, associations, businesses."<sup>110</sup> By listening to the community through MidCity socials held in the Yellow Church and organized through the MidCity Neighborhood Association, we know that the residents of the neighborhood have hopes and dreams for their community. We, as a church, should not impose our own hopes and dreams on a community of which we are not a part.

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<sup>109</sup> "Planning Retreat." Appendix 16.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

- From the perspective of the community, ownership of property within MidCity would give Northminster an equal voice with community residents and community based organizations.

There are different levels of investment in engagement with a community. Ownership would indicate a sense of faithfulness to our relationship and an indication that Northminster wants to be a permanent part of the community.

- During interviews conducted by the Wider Net Sub-Committee in 2011, community partners, Operation Shoestring, Wells Church, and Habitat for Humanity, expressed an interest in seeing us have a “physical presence” in the neighborhood. <sup>111</sup>
- Theologically, ownership creates an incarnational presence.
- This recommendation is supported by the Wider Net Ministries Committee which is most familiar with the relationship with and needs of the community.

In working toward ownership of property, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee makes the following affirmations and recommendations:

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Appoint an Ad Hoc Committee to identify property to purchase and to renovate or build a structure to support programming needs.**<sup>112</sup>
  - This committee should serve as a separate committee in consultation with the Wider Net Ministries Committee rather than a sub-committee of the Wider Net Ministries Committee. This structure allows the ad hoc committee to work without taking the time and energy of the already productive and ongoing Wider Net Ministries Committee members. The ad hoc committee should consider the following guidelines:
    - Ownership should be required rather than leasing or simply “using” property.
    - Property should be embedded within the neighborhood rather than on Bailey Avenue.
    - Property should be on the east side of Bailey Avenue because Northminster already has the most significant connections with neighborhood residents in that area.

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<sup>111</sup> See Appendix 8.

<sup>112</sup> “Planning Retreat.” Appendix 16.

- Physical structure(s) should blend with the neighborhood (i.e. a modest physical presence).
  - Physical structure(s) should be flexible enough for all types of uses, especially the following:
    - Space to provide hospitality for celebration and for grief.
    - Space for skills training and after school programming.
    - Space to grow – increase the number of children participating in after school programming. (Yellow Church is 1200-1400 square feet, and Northminster currently offers an After School Program for 23 students in that space).
  - Physical structure(s) should include a kitchen.
  - Consult with Wider Net Ministries Committee to determine specific needs, such as the following:
    - Square footage (minimum of 3000 square feet)
    - Number and size of rooms (Small group room? Computer lab? Office space?)
    - Kitchen facilities
    - Restrooms
    - Internet connections
    - Office space
    - Storage needs
    - Outdoor areas: size, usage, fencing
    - Programming needs
    - Volunteer needs
  - Once the church has authorized the purchase and title and zoning issues have been resolved, the committee, still in consultation with the Wider Net Ministries Committee, would oversee building or renovating of the structure(s).
- **Task the Finance Committee to identify a plan for financial resources to support purchase of property as well as the building/renovation of structures and the maintenance and operating expenses associated with property ownership.**
- Use \$105,500 in the designated fund for identifying a “sense of place” to finance the property and building.
  - Arrange payment for resolving title and zoning issues.
  - Identify a plan for financing the remaining cost of purchase and building/renovation.
  - Identify a plan for covering estimated maintenance and operating expenses (keeping in mind that Northminster currently covers the cost of

maintenance, repairs, and operating expenses at the Yellow Church in the amount of approximately \$10,000 per year). Additional considerations would be:

- Potential for additional on-site personnel
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Maintenance (building and yard)
- Supplies and equipment
- Facilities reserve to cover future needs

#### **AFFIRMATIONS:**

- **Continue Northminster's presence in the Yellow Church as long as allowed.**

In order to retain our relationships with the neighborhood, Northminster should not take any action that could be construed as "pulling out." At the point that property is purchased and a building built or renovated and ready for use, the Wider Net Ministries Committee can determine what activities or presence will continue in the Yellow Church. The intent to own property in the neighborhood is the intent to increase our commitment and expand our relationship, not alter the current relationships.

## **AN INITIAL ACT OF MINISTRY:**

### **THE IDEA:**

The initial Long Range Planning Report in 1998 recommended that Northminster seek “partnership with institutions” in the community.<sup>113</sup> The report also recommended that the church “identify a specific area of need that is not being addressed and establish plans to provide necessary support.”<sup>114</sup>

The Special Missions Project Committee further defined Northminster’s relationship with MidCity/Georgetown by recommending “an initial act of ministry.”<sup>115</sup> Specifically, the recommendation was to partner with Habitat for Humanity to build 6 houses in 5 years, to contribute to 14 Habitat house builds, to fund the purchase of 20 lots, to fund a construction supervisor, and to organize family recruitment, land purchase, partnerships, and labor through a Northminster committee. In addition, the Special Missions Project Committee recommended ongoing communication with residents, associations, and businesses and partnership with churches and agencies in MidCity/Georgetown. The committee recommended that the church respond to requests from neighborhood residents, and that the actions of the church were to “touch lives spiritually, physically, and socially and empowering the neighborhood people.” The plan was to bring hope and opportunity to the residents of the neighborhood through cooperative activities and by leading residents to resources.<sup>116</sup>

Possibilities for an initial act of ministry included:

- Home building in conjunction with the proposal submitted by Habitat for Humanity
- Adult literacy classes
- After school program for children / youth (in cooperation with Operation Shoestring)
- Home repair for existing homes (particularly elderly homeowners)
- Clean-up and upgrading of community spaces (parks, playgrounds)
- Food pantry
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- Job training and computer classes

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<sup>113</sup> Williams. Appendix 4.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> “A Wider Net.” Appendix 5.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

## **THE REALITY:**

Northminster has maintained ongoing communications with residents, associations, and businesses in the area. Northminster encouraged and supported the organization of the MidCity Neighborhood Association. Jill Buckley and other members of the Wider Net Ministries Committee have regularly attended meetings and listened to the concerns and the hopes of the community. In addition, the neighborhood churches invited Northminster to a meeting to discuss the possibility of a teen center in the area. The relationship between Northminster and Wells United Methodist Church has continued to grow as Wells has offered its facilities for various programming needs of Northminster and the Yellow Church.

Northminster has continued to maintain relations with community partners such as Operation Shoestring and Habitat for Humanity. Since 2001, Northminster has continued to provide breakfast and devotionals for Operation Shoestring, and Northminster also financially supported the summer intern at Operation Shoestring from 2002-2011. Northminster's after school program, which has been ongoing since 2007, addresses needs in the community which Operation Shoestring is not able to reach with their after school program. Also in 2007, Northminster partnered with Excel by 5 to hold a community luncheon at Operation Shoestring. In 2012, Northminster worked with Operation Shoestring to create a community garden. Also, Northminster partnered with Habitat for Humanity as planned in A Wider Net proposal. The result was the purchase of 20 lots and the building of 6 homes from 2001 to 2008. In addition, the partnership continues in other ways such as home repairs and rehabs.

Although the reality also includes the fact that there have been foreclosures and abandoned lots and houses, the Wider Net Ministries Committee has been involved in addressing residual blight for the past 3 years.<sup>117</sup> Working with the community, 27 lots were cleared in 2013. In addition, 34 lots were cleared in 2014, and in 2015, they financially supported the continued maintenance of 24 lots. Northminster does not work alone. The city maintains 30 of its own lots, and the neighborhood residents maintain 40 lots. In addition to lot maintenance, the committee and other Northminster members have provided tree removal and assisted with a community garden. They have

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<sup>117</sup> See PowerPoint presentation by Jim Johnston, Appendix 19.

a plan for Northminster working to maintain 12 lots in 2016 for a cost of \$16,000.<sup>118</sup>

In addition to lot maintenance, Northminster worked with the community to accomplish the addition of speed bumps to Wood Street. According to the 2014 Habitat for Humanity report, there has been a reduction in crime, an increased sense of safety, and an enhanced appearance in the neighborhood since 2008.<sup>119</sup>

Various programs and events have taken place. Some have been abandoned due to lack of participation or lack of energy and sometimes lack of success. However, programs such as the Thursday Morning Bible Class, After School Programming, Summer Programming, Neighborhood Lot Maintenance, and the House Repair Program have continued and remain healthy endeavors.

### **THE FUTURE: We are called to maintain a “faithful presence.”**

Our relationship must be one of a “faithful presence” which provides opportunities for all models of engagement. We are now past initiation. If we are called to be “a people”, then the focus of our relationships with MidCity/Georgetown cannot be limited to programming and events orchestrated by Northminster for the benefit of MidCity/Georgetown. Our relationships must include a creation of community which includes being on the receiving end of situations which spiritually, physically, and socially empower all of us to be one community – “a people.” In support of this belief, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee makes the following affirmations and recommendations:

### **AFFIRMATIONS:**

- **Continue to support and strengthen activities which have been deemed “successful” by the Wider Net Ministries Committee.<sup>120</sup>**

At this time, those activities include the following:

- Home Repairs
- Lot Maintenance
- After School Programming
- Summer Programming (including Children's Bible Camp)
- Thursday Morning Bible Class
- Financial Support for Interns in the Community

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<sup>118</sup> “Minutes,” March 29, 2015. Appendix 16. However, according to the Wider Net Ministries Committee, the amount allotted for lot maintenance has subsequently decreased to \$12,000.

<sup>119</sup> Habitat for Humanity. Appendix 18.

<sup>120</sup> “Planning Retreat.” Appendix 16.

- Financial Support to MidCity/Georgetown youth to participate in youth activities as recommended by the Youth Committee
- **Recognizing that all models of engagement are valid, continue to provide various opportunities for engagement.**

The Wider Net Ministries Committee has grown into a healthy and active standing committee which listens to our members on an ongoing basis. In recognizing all models of engagement as valid, we must be willing to continue listening to the needs of our congregation. We should promote relationship building activities as well as project oriented activities. Not only should there be opportunities to “work for” the betterment of the community, there should also be opportunities for us to simply “be with” the community. An example might be sharing a meal in the community or experiencing a play day in the park with the community. Not only should there be opportunities to “work with” the community, there should also be opportunities for us to “be for” the community through prayer and through monetary donations to the community or to the Wider Net fund. We must recognize that each member is capable of different models of engagement at different times; therefore, we cannot expect all members to be ready and willing to engage in all models of engagement at all times.
- **Continue to encourage opportunities that involve both giving AND receiving.**

We should recognize that relationships are reciprocal. Not only should we give of our gifts and resources, we should also learn to recognize the gifts and resources of the community of which we want to be a part. In receiving, we recognize that a person has something to offer -- something we need. We should provide opportunities that require us to practice receiving. A prime example is in receiving the gift of Mrs. Helen Taliaferro's coconut cake which has been a donation to our Youth Dessert Auction for the past few years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Continue conversations with the community.<sup>121</sup>**

Our faithful presence in the community must be accompanied by faithful listening. Opportunities to dream together, to plan together, to work together should begin with our efforts to listen. Only when we have been accepted as a permanent part of the community will the community be

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<sup>121</sup> “Planning Retreat.” Appendix 16.

willing and able to faithfully listen to us. Only then will we have the right to hope and dream for the community because only then will there be no “us” or “them”. There will only be “a people” hoping and dreaming for “our community.” These conversations need to happen regularly, and these conversations should include community partners with whom we want to strengthen partnerships and to coordinate resources. The Associate Pastor for Community Ministry, with the support of the Wider Net Ministries Committee, will be instrumental in establishing and strengthening these relationships and instigating these conversations. Community partners could include the local schools – Galloway, Rowan, and Lanier – to organize an expansion of after school programs in the area. Community partners could include churches that are invested in the area although not physically present in the area. Coordinating resources with MidTown Partners would also be beneficial.

- **Communicate opportunities.**<sup>122</sup>

Employ various means of communication (newsletters, web page, social media, emails, etc.) to inform Northminster members of ways to give of their time and talents and resources within the community as well as notice of opportunities to create relationships within the community.

Communication should flow both ways between MidCity/Georgetown and Northminster. Communication will encourage welcoming Northminster members to MidCity/Georgetown events and welcoming MidCity/Georgetown residents to Northminster events.

- **Employ an After School Administrator.**<sup>123</sup>

Although all of the responsibilities for the After School Program had fallen primarily on the willing shoulders of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry and a few dedicated volunteers, there was a need for someone able to dedicate additional time and training in the area of elementary education to create a truly effective program. In 2012, the Wider Net Ministries Committee hired an After School Administrator to assist with the planning for the after school program. In 2013, this position was altered to only assist with kindergarten and first grade. The Associate Pastor for Community Ministry continues to handle the additional grades. As Northminster's relationships within the community have grown, the tug on the time of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry has grown as well. Ideally, the After School Administrator would be a contract employee of

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

Northminster and paid \$20,000 per year to handle the curriculum and oversight for the entire After School Program.

○ **Consider the employment of an administrator for the facility chosen by Northminster to serve as the permanent “sense of place.”<sup>124</sup>**

Once Northminster has established a permanent place within MidCity/Georgetown, an on-site administrator would be beneficial. The original responsibilities of the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry included, “coordinating and facilitating Northminster’s efforts to support and carry out programs of ministry in the Georgetown/MidCity neighborhood.”<sup>125</sup> However, as the relationship continues to grow, these administrative responsibilities as the community organizer will grow as well. An administrator may include the expansion of the position of “After School Administrator,” or it may need to be an additional position. The Wider Net Ministries Committee will be in the best position to establish the job description. Ideally, this position would include the responsibility to coordinate with other neighborhood organizations to share resources and communicate opportunities within the neighborhood. An example would be coordinating with MidTown CDC in areas such as a GED program, a Leadership Institute, a Prosperity Center, a Health Clinic, a Daycare, and the Charter School. This person would also work with the Associate Pastor for Community Ministry to partner with local schools and organizations.

○ **Purchase a vehicle that would support the work of the Wider Net Ministries Committee.<sup>126</sup>**

- In accepting that we are called to be “a people”, we must also accept that ease of movement is necessary
- In listening to the community, the committee heard the need for MidCity/Georgetown kids to experience the world outside of the neighborhood, and a vehicle for transportation makes that possible.
- In listening to the community, the committee heard the need for transportation to job training and job opportunities.
- Transportation would facilitate our partnerships with other organizations. For example, transportation to other tutoring facilities.
- A vehicle would also be available to the Youth Committee and Children’s Ministries Committee for transportation needs.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Allen, 17. Appendix 15.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

- A church member has offered to work with the church to locate and donate an acceptable vehicle. This church member has experience working with another 501(c)(3); therefore, this church member can provide guidance in handling issues of insurance and security.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Throughout this process, the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee heard numerous suggestions for future programming. The Wider Net Ministries Committee is in the best position to determine the true needs of the community and the energy of the community (both MidCity/Georgetown and Northminster). The following is merely a list of suggestions gathered over the course of the work of the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee:

### ❖ Suggested Programs:

- ≈ Green and Healthy Housing Initiative – lead paint
- ≈ Job Training and Job Bank
- ≈ Male to Male Mentor Program
- ≈ Community Newsletter
- ≈ Asset Mapping -- coordinate and communicate community resources
- ≈ Leadership Institute
- ≈ Summer Camp with partner churches (larger version of Kids' Club)
- ≈ Host classes which meet the needs voiced by the residents
- ≈ Advocacy with Local Government
- ≈ Create Model Block
- ≈ Build More Habitat Houses
- ≈ Create a Career/Skill development and Resource Center
- ≈ Neighborhood Daycare / Learning Center
- ≈ Coordinate Neighborhood After School Programs
- ≈ Health Fair – Basic Screening and Job Training
- ≈ Recreational Center (as dreamed by the community)
  - Learning about
    - . Godly things
    - . Respect
    - . Bible class
    - . Everyday life (Responsibility for self / Getting along with others)
  - Swing set
  - Doesn't have to be in the park or near the park
  - Basketball
  - Field trips
  - Counseling
  - Academics
  - Exercise
  - Job searches
  - Snacks (healthy)
  - Job training

- Life skills (Appropriate attire / Behavior)
- Pool
- Theater
- Arcade
- Pool table
- Something constructive besides sports
  - . Drama class
  - . Arts and crafts
  - . Trade skills (apprentice)
  - . Cleaning community
  - . Learning
  - . Gardening
  - . Cooking
  - . Hunting / fishing
  - . Camping
  - . Sewing
  - . Singing
- ≈ Community parents working together to watch kids
- ≈ Neighborhood Watch
- ≈ Improve Relationship with Police
- ≈ Transportation for children to get out of the neighborhood
- ≈ Create jobs for ex-felons

❖ Suggested Relational Activities:

- ≈ Encourage relationships with family, not just with child
- ≈ Continue MidCity Socials
- ≈ Continue Community Partner Gatherings
- ≈ Send invitations both ways for Bible study and other gatherings
- ≈ Wednesday night suppers / gatherings in Yellow Church / Park
- ≈ Worship regularly with all neighborhood churches

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## APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Wider Net Missions Timeline
- Appendix 2: Map of Northminster Area of Focus : MidCity/Georgetown
- Appendix 3: Northminster Baptist Church, "Covenant and Bylaws."
- Appendix 4: J. Kelley Williams, Jr., "Letter to Northminster Baptist Church," June 5, 2001. (Quoting 1998 Long Range Planning Committee Recommendation).
- Appendix 5: Special Missions Project Committee, "A Wider Net," 2001.
- Appendix 6: Northminster Baptist Church, "Minutes of Called Business Meeting," June 10, 2001. (Adoption of Deacon recommendation to adopt A Wider Net).
- Appendix 7: Wider Net Review Committee, "Committee Recommendations," August 16, 2009.
- Appendix 8: Wider Net Sub-Committee, "Notes from Meetings with Community Partners," 2011.
- Appendix 9: Board of Deacons of Northminster Baptist Church, "Minutes of Board of Deacons," July 17, 2011. (Approval of recommendations of Wider Net Transition Committee).
- Appendix 10: Primary Scriptural References identified during the course of the work of the Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee
- Appendix 11: Chuck Poole, "Theological Reflections on *A Wider Net*," 2012.
- Appendix 12: Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Polh, *Friendship at the Margins*, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press 2010).
- Appendix 13: Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owen, *Living Without Enemies*, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press 2011). (Excerpts).
- Appendix 14: Jill Buckley, "A Wider Net: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Comments," 2011.
- Appendix 15: Courtney E. Allen, "A Wider Net: Beyond the Walls and the Possibilities which Lie Before Us," (Senior Project, Master of Divinity, Wake Forest University School of Divinity, 2010).
- Appendix 16: Wider Net Ad Hoc Vision Committee, "Minutes and Notes," 2012-2015.
- Appendix 17: MidCity/Georgetown Census Information provided by Associate Pastor for Community Ministry.
- Appendix 18: Habitat for Humanity, "What Does the Data Say?: Evidence of Quality of Life Improvements through Affordable Housing, MidCity, Jackson, Mississippi, from 2008 to 2014," 2014.
- Appendix 19: PowerPoint Presentation by Jim Johnston, March 29, 2015
- Appendix 20: Consolidated Financial Information for A Wider Net