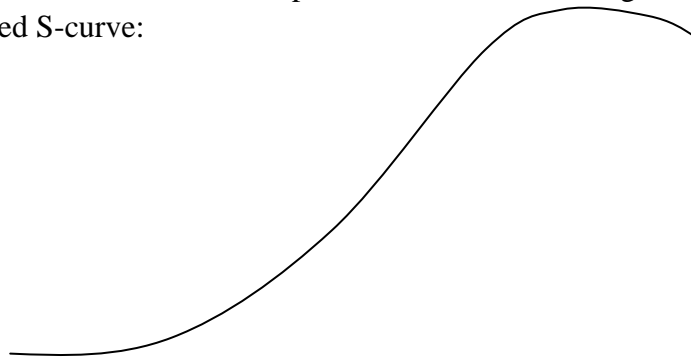


PCA Strategic Plan

Prepared for 2009 and 2010 Cooperative Ministries Committee

I. CREATING A PERSPECTIVE FOR PLANNING

The Presbyterian Church in America progresses into its fourth decade with increasing awareness of the challenges presented by our changing world as we seek to be faithful to our Sovereign Lord. One obvious way of measuring the net effect of these challenges is the decreasing rate of the PCA's numerical growth. Through the early decades of our existence we grew at between five and eight percent per year (enabling us roughly to double in total size each decade). In recent years our growth has been two to three percent. These dynamics are typical of young organizations and institutions whose periods of advance and regression are often represented by a modified S-curve:



While numerical growth is not necessarily a gauge of faithfulness or influence, slowed growth at least requires consideration of how we should best represent our Savior and most responsibly participate in the progress of his Kingdom. Organizations that best fulfill their mission determine how to maintain their values while honestly facing challenges that could lead to long-term decline (anticipating needed change before a decline in the S-curve becomes precipitous). This Strategic Plan seeks to address these realities by helping the PCA identify its challenges, address them with strategies that are consistent with our biblical values, and build denominational support for implementing these strategies. The overall goal is to enable the church to work together to steward its blessings and resources to advance the cause of Christ according to the principles and priorities of his Word.

A. Charting Change

In order to bring about healthy change a church must develop a “holy discontent” with some aspects of its present situation. If people assume that *everything is right* (ER in the chart below), then there is no incentive to change. Apathy and immobility characterize the church because any change is presumed to be the enemy of present comfort. But the antidote to apathy is not panic. Those who seek to bring about change by claiming that *everything is wrong* (EW in the chart below) create cynicism and paralysis. Change is meaningless when hope dies. When everything is wrong the perceived enemy is not change but rather the leadership (past or present) that allowed this hopeless situation to develop. Thus, motivations for healthy change cannot be found in either self-serving apathy or other-directed cynicism, but rather in something between.

Healthy change occurs when problems are acknowledged – providing motivation for change – along with a realistic vision of what life can be when problems are addressed – providing hope for the future. People who have hope for a changed future are neither apathetic nor despairing; they believe, “*We Have a Mission*” (WHAM in the chart below) and want to make progress in God’s purposes. A compelling sense of mission creates zeal for change, and makes any barrier to progress toward the envisioned future the real enemy. The “sweet spot” for healthy change occurs when God’s people understand and unite in missional purpose. Mission creates zeal for change, hope for tomorrow, and a desire to see plans that tell us how our lives can further God’s purposes.

Thus, the goal of this Strategic Plan is not to convince others that everything is right or that everything is wrong. In order to annul apathy, we intend to be realistic about the challenges we must face (both internally and externally). **In order to dispel despair, we intend to identify the resources and blessings God has granted the PCA. Finally, we intend to propose plans for using these resources and blessings in ways that we pray will unite and ignite God’s people for his purposes. All of this we do because we believe we have a mission, and we believe the vast majority of those in the PCA believe the same.**

Charting Change

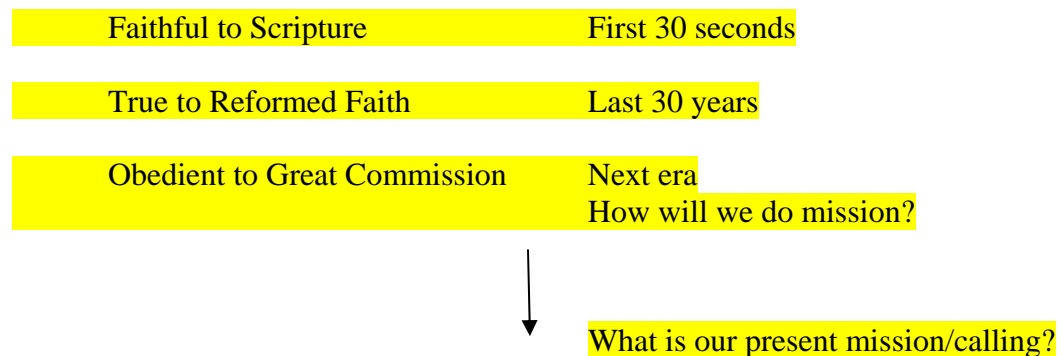
<u>Situation</u>	<u>Attitudes/Responses</u>	<u>Perceived Enemy</u>
EW	Cynicism/Paralysis	Past/Present leadership enemy
WHAM	Zeal/Change	Barriers to Progress
ER	Apathy/ Immobility	Change is Enemy

B. How Has the PCA's Mission Developed So Far?

The development of missional purpose begins with identifying the values we hold most dear. When our values guide the plans we make for addressing challenges to Kingdom progress, then we believe we are acting consistently with our mission and have zeal for these purposes. Our values are well identified in the "motto" of the PCA: Faithful to Scripture, True to the Reformed Faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission.

The phrases of this motto also provide insight into the missional development of the PCA. It is fair to say that commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture was the driving force of our founding and that the churches who initially came into the PCA immediately united in this value. Determining what it meant to be true to the Reformed faith was not as unifying, and created significant debates among us for the next 30 years. These debates both clouded understanding of our mission and inhibited cooperative participation in it. While progress has been made in defining how we will hold each other accountable for being true to the Reformed faith, relational tensions wax and wane around this issue. Thus, the next stage of PCA development likely relates to the last phrase of our motto. How we do mission together, and whether we can do mission together, is the key to our future. If we are able to unite in missional purpose, we have much to contribute to the future of the Kingdom; if we cannot, then our future is likely incessant, inward-focused pettiness.

PCA Missional Development



Determining how we do mission together will likely surface past relational and perspectival tensions, but failing to define our mission guarantees our demise. Thus, developing plans for doing mission together simultaneously puts us in a position of great peril and opportunity. The peril of renewed dissension is obvious, but pursuit of the opportunity is essential. Only if we can unite around missional plans that employ our differing gifts in sacrifice and service to Kingdom priorities – only then does our church point toward a future that will inspire her people's zeal and justify her God's blessing.

II. IDENTIFYING OUR MISSION (understanding “Formal” and “Animating” Values)

“Formal” Values

(Values stated in the approved standards of the church)

The values that frame our mission are both *formal* and *animating*. The formal values are found in the standards approved by the church in its legislative processes. These documents interpret the church’s understanding of its Scriptural obligations and have varying levels of authority. Together these documents serve to identify the values that the church has officially agreed will guide its beliefs and practices.

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith (with Larger and Shorter Catechisms)

B. The Book of Church Order

C. Historic Motto:

Faithful to Scripture
True to Reformed Faith
Obedient to Great Commission

D. 2006 Strategic Plan Statement: “A healthy denomination is characterized by...”

1. Preeminence of Christ
2. Increasing numbers of healthy churches
3. Presbyteries involved in cooperative ministry
4. General Assembly contributing to health of denomination (coordinating resources for effective fulfillment of Great Commission, serving judicatories through committee/agency work, fulfilling appropriate review and oversight functions)
5. Committees and Agencies effectively carrying out work of GA

“Animating” Values

(The concerns and goals that “get us up and going” each morning)

Though the formal documents that identify our *formal values* are developed with meticulous care, they are in many ways the broadest expression of our church’s mission priorities. Beyond the formal values that establish the general nature and commitments of the denomination are the “animating values” that stimulate the daily activities of individuals, local churches or groups within the denomination.

A. Animating Values of Local Churches in the PCA

The PCA has historically held that the authority for beliefs or practices not specified in our constitutional standards resides in local leadership. This means that there is considerable diversity in the PCA’s “animating values” – the concerns, goals and practices that get us up and going each morning for the work of our individual presbyteries, ministries and churches. We can often identify a local church’s animating values by having its people identify its primary ministry goals – or, more simply, what do they think are the marks of great ministry. Animating values can appropriately differ given the great variety of contexts in which churches minister. The list below would identify the “animating values” of many local churches in the PCA:

Great ministry in the local church is characterized by . . .

1. Everyone understanding and applying Scripture	15. Supporting Pro-Life movements
2. Perpetuating and refining Reformed Theology	16. Creating Christian community
3. Worshipping God rightly and well	17. Supernaturally renewed relationships
4. Involving everyone in personal evangelism	18. Securing family/married life
5. Everyone grasping the grace of the Gospel	19. Ministry to the disadvantaged and oppressed
6. Multiplying “healthy” churches	20. Racial reconciliation
7. Transferring the Faith to the next generation	21. Supporting mission work
8. Right administration of the Sacraments	22. Revival thru viral repentance and faith
9. Transforming culture	23. Pervasive prayer
10. Good Bible preaching	24. Predominant personal piety
11. Helping people to love Jesus	25. Separation from unbelief
12. Support of Christian schooling	26. Church growth
13. Reclaiming the nation for Christ	27. Biblical care of hurting people
14. Supporting Christian artists	28. Other ...

B. Animating Values of Groups within the PCA

Just as individual churches have animating values, so also do groups of churches or individuals within the denomination. Again, these values are diverse, but because they characterize groups that are often seeking to set direction for others beyond their immediate context or for the denomination as a whole, such values can create tensions with groups who have different animating values. As a consequence, polarities have developed both in what groups identify as their animating values and in how they perceive others.

With apologies for obvious stereotyping, we identify some of these group polarities and perceptions below – not to perpetuate tensions – but to “name the elephants in the room” that must be handled in order for us to pull together for Kingdom purposes. We intend by the labels below to be “equal opportunity offenders,” helping each group to understand its role in the PCA and how that group may be perceived by those with different animating values. Of course, the real goal is not to offend, but to help all see that our differences typically are varying emphases on aspects of the formal values we all affirm.

As with local churches, we can often identify a group’s animating values by having its adherents identify their primary ministry goals (which may or may not be formally stated). The left column of the chart below identifies goals common among groups in the PCA; the left column identifies how others may perceive groups with these ministry goals.

<u>Our primary mission/calling is . . .</u>	<u>Perception of others</u>
1. Properly expressing Reformed Theology -restore Southern Presbyterianism -ensure doctrinal faithfulness at all levels	(insensitive to relational) [all mind]
2. Reaching the lost -multiply churches -multiply people in churches -multiply mission support	(ignores doctrine & doxological) [all heart]
3. Restoring the culture -reclaim nation-founding commitments -support conservative politics	(idolizes the past & politics) [fears future]
4. Protecting the Faithful -separate from secular -support schooling alternatives	(idolizes family/community) [fears culture]
5. Transforming the Culture -oppose oppression (e.g., poverty, racism) -reach “gatekeepers” (e.g., media, arts, profs)	(idolizes external o/ internal) [forgets spiritual]

III. IDENTIFYING OUR CHALLENGES

Because the *animating values* of those in the PCA are so much more diverse than its *formal values*, the PCA has struggled to maximize its organizational strengths. For example, despite our formal values of connectional polity and cooperative ministry, less than half of the churches of the PCA support any denominational agency or committee (less than 20 percent give at the Partnership Share level). Presbyteries are increasingly perceived as mere credentialing bureaus or discipline courts with little ability to unite members in ministry. The cooperative efforts that do exist are often directed toward affinity gatherings or the ministries of large churches that have become missional expressions of the animating values of specific groups.

This is not to suggest that overall there has been a great deal of cooperative effort. We remain an anti-denominational denomination – excusing individualistic ministry by re-telling the narratives of past abuses in former denominations, demonizing denominational leadership or movements to justify non-support of the larger church, or simply making self-survival or self-fulfillment the consuming goal of local church ministry. In these respects we simply reflect the surrounding secular and religious culture where institutional and organizational commitments have been eroded by the demise of family systems and loss of community identity. These losses are exacerbated by economic and technological changes that simultaneously shrink our world and allow each of us to live in personal isolation or in shrinking, special-interest enclaves. However unique we may feel is our struggling to maintain historical distinctions, ministry continuity and generational cohesion, we actually echo struggles occurring in every major Evangelical denomination. The response of most has been to focus increasingly on their own security, not recognizing that (for denominations as well as local churches) allowing people to focus on themselves inevitably destroys the selflessness that is the church's lifeblood.

In order for those of us in the PCA to see beyond self-interests and to be willing to work cooperatively despite differences in our animating values, we must have a renewed sense of collective mission. The catalytic power of our founding was fueled by a shared zeal to wrest a Biblical church from mainline corruptions. Differing understandings of what it meant to hold to Reformed distinctions in ministry and mission were either unrecognized or suppressed to support the primary mission of combating liberalism. That mission was compelling enough to unite us in ministry despite our differences. Willingness now to honor our differences while harnessing our shared blessings will again require a sense of being united in a cause that is of similar Biblical consequence.

Such a cause cannot be concocted from marketing schemes or designed to reflect the ministry preferences of a particular branch of our denomination. The cause that is our present calling must be forged from a comprehensive and realistic understanding of the challenges this generation must face in order to live faithfully before God and for his Kingdom. Some of these challenges are external, thrust upon us by dynamics of our history and culture. Other challenges are of our own making and will have to be honestly faced and fairly handled in order for our church to participate meaningfully in God's purposes. Such external and internal challenges the

PCA faces are listed below. These lists are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather are intended to help us face the magnitude of our tasks and, consequently, the necessity of facing them together.

External Challenges

A. North American and European Challenges

1. Loss of Christian consensus in West replaced by Naturalistic worldview
2. Dominance of Pluralism and intolerance of religious “preference”
3. “Hidden revival” in immigrant church; church decline in general U.S. culture
4. Mainline church decline
5. Evangelicals now mainline (minority → majority)

(Salvation theology → Kingdom theology)

(Orthodoxy [Word] → Orthopraxy [deed])

(Doctrinal consensus → Relational consensus)

No Protestant faith group rivals Evangelicals in both membership and political influence. Evangelicals have moved from a mid-Twentieth Century minority to an early 21st-Century majority. With majority status has come a shift in emphasis from hope not-of-this-world (Salvation theology) to this-world hope (Kingdom theology). Reacting to self-oriented pietism and consumerism of previous generations, movements as diverse as Focus on the Family and the New Perspective on Paul have argued the Gospel requires Christians to engage in some form of cultural transformation. Orthodoxy (the right proclamation of the Word) has been deemed impossible without orthopraxy (the the right practice of the Word). With the diminished emphasis on the Word, Evangelicalism has become a much broader tent theologically, embracing those who both in doctrine and lifestyle choices differ widely from previous generations. Evangelical leaders and laypersons are paying less and less attention to denominational lines and distinctives, but while trying to survive in an increasingly secular culture that views the church as either irrelevant or polarizing.

6. Evangelicals strongly divided over Formal (let’s be church) vs. Informal (let’s be real) worship practices (differences are *not* strictly generational)
7. Evangelical generational divides (Builders vs. Boomers vs. Gen-X; e.g. zeal for programmatic evangelism vs. relational evangelism; antipathy to vs. acceptance of pop culture; differing socio-political agendas – see below)

Builders/Boomers = Constraint Theology (STOP abortion, homosexuality, pornography, immigration, minimum wage, etc.)

Busters/X-ers/ Millennials = Compassion Theology (HELP poor, discriminated, AIDS victims, refugees, environment, etc.)

8. Dominant influence of parachurch for diaconal and mission work
9. Rise of Emergent Church in West (Proclamation emphasis → Incarnation emphasis)
10. Youth exodus of Western Church and modern Evangelicalism
11. Rising generation financial stress, and sense of having been denied earlier generations' privileges
12. Postmodern philosophies and mindset (subjective truth; narrative vs. didactic learning)
13. Orality and visual literacy of Western youth culture and Developing World
14. Pervasive Biblical/doctrinal Illiteracy (all generations)

15. Birth control/abortion normalized
16. Traditional family decline (divorce, delayed adolescence, delayed marriages, starter marriages, pervasive pornography, working parents, absent fathers, abuse)
17. Gender Roles re-definition and confusion (more than Feminism per se)

- 18. Transition from Anglo-majority culture in U.S.**
19. Transition to No-growth Economies in Western Europe as Birth Rates Fall among All But Immigrant (Muslim, African and Asian) Populations

B. Global Challenges

1. Most rapid growth of Christianity in world history
2. Re-centering of global Christianity and missionary origins (viz. Southern hemispheres Christianity)
3. Conservatism of Developing World church vs. Liberalism of Western church (e.g. African Anglican communions leading efforts to combat North American homosexual agendas and Islamic expansionism).
4. Majority World church deserving and demanding influence on global Christianity development and doctrine with significant challenges ahead, e.g., Male and female leadership of Chinese Church vs. Male leadership of Developing World church vs. Male and female leadership of Western mainline & new Evangelicals vs. Male leadership of PCA).
5. Expanse of Global Pentecostalism
6. Rise of Radical Islam (Hinduism) fueled by economic/political inequities
7. Rise of Alternative Spiritualities (as major world religions all dominated by materialistic nominalism)
8. Pandemic Threats: AIDS, Avian Flu, Bio-terrorism
9. Class stratification deepening (poverty and ethnic divides)
10. Resource concentrations increasing (oil, wealth, population, food, medicine)
11. Third World debt increasing and leading to greater disparities (and antipathies)
12. Waning impact of U.S. on global economy (and interdependence of all economies)
13. Fracturing of European Union
14. Increase of national economies dependent on drug, weapon and sex trades
15. Worldwide recession affecting church giving, staffing and mission support
16. The “Chinese-century” ahead
17. Chinese aggression concerns for Soviet and Central Asia (one-child, birth-control policy favoring males will lead to an excess of 70 million unmarried males of military age within 20 years)
18. Russian Federation re-militarization
19. Middle-east destabilization continuing with possible nuclear threats (especially as oil depletes and/or Western economies become less oil dependent)
20. African ethnic struggles destabilizing continent (allowing Islamic, Russian and Chinese encroachments)

21. World urbanization and Giga-cities (but in U.S. growth continues to be Suburban as inner cities and rural areas empty with few exceptions)
22. Technological/Informational acceleration and world compression
23. Influence of Western entertainment/pop culture dominant in Developing World
24. Aging (and decline) of Industrialized-world population vs. Youth-ifying of Majority-world population
25. Sex trafficking the modern slavery dilemma

Internal Challenges

The magnitude of the external challenges listed above should make it apparent that the temporal powers of our church are not the ultimate answers to our world's problems. While the church cannot simultaneously ignore the world's current problems and minister in Christ's name, her energies will be consumed in futility if she perceives her primary mandate to be re-creating Eden with earthly resources. Jesus said that his Kingdom was not of this world, that we would always have the poor with us, and that his people would face suffering until his return. The ultimate mandate of the church is not to fix a fallen world, but to give God's people rest and rescue from its corruptions. This is done by honoring, proclaiming and demonstrating the truths of God's eternal love. God's people give these truths credibility by the way we worship Him according to his Word and serve as salt and light in the world.

With God's blessing our efforts can truly be culturally transformative, and the cultural mandate of Scripture obligates God's people to bring the light of the Gospel and the demands of Christ's Lordship into every inch of the world over which they have influence. Yet, the priority of the Gospel remains spiritual transformation through which cultural transformation may come but by which eternal security assuredly comes. This spiritual priority by no means lessens the concern or obligation of the church to seek peace and justice in the world. Rather this spiritual priority reflects the Biblical understanding that, through its transformed people, the church of Jesus Christ is the most powerful change agent in any society – whether religious, secular or pluralistic. When a community of believers lives faithful to the Gospel – loving one another, forgiving one another, helping the helpless, loving enemies, sacrificing for the undeserving, honoring Christ, sharing his claims for this world, and living with confidence in the blessings of the next – then, Christ's Spirit becomes evident and moves across society as he intends.

Our obligation is not to demand that the Spirit move according to our design or timing, but to be vessels for his wisdom and work. As jars of clay, we should expect that our efforts will sometimes be flawed. Still, we are a branch of the visible church through which the Spirit brings his transformation and should expect that God will use us as we seek to serve him in humility and repentance. True humility will require understanding that we are not the only branch of his church through which God will work, and also acknowledgement of the many challenges for which our wisdom alone is insufficient. True repentance will require confession of weakness and sin that are evident in many of our internal challenges. These internal challenges are now listed not to discourage or blame, but to enable us to address what we must in order to be a worthy vessel for God's transforming work of souls and society:

1. **Slowed Growth with Lack of "Rallying" Strategic Plan** (key influencers also "burned" by previous 2000-2006 Strategic Plan Process)
2. Predominantly Small Churches Struggling to Survive (49% of churches have less than 120 members; 20% have less than 50 members; only 8% have more than 500 members)
3. Anti-denominational Historical Context and Post-denominational Present Context

4. Loss of Denominational Heritage, Knowledge and Identity with Passing of Denominational “Fathers”
5. Culture of Suspicion and Caricature Perpetuated by Past Narratives (e.g., encroaching liberalism, insensitive bureaucracies, racist agendas, big steeple power) and Present Divisions (see below):
 - a. Have and Have-not Divisions (size, salaries, recognition, influence)
 - b. Generational Divides: Builders/Boomers=Institutional priorities; Gen-X=Relational priorities (See earlier discussion of Evangelical generational divide)
 - c. Regional Divides (Southern identity; Northeastern; and Western autonomy)
 - d. Perspectival Divides (Creating false and destructive dichotomies)
 - Aggressive TRs (eradicating unReformed) vs. Cynical Progressives (abandoning Reformed)
 - Doctrinalists (theological-erosion policemen) vs. Missionalists (reaching-the-lost pragmatists)
 - Southern Presbyterian Theology vs. Continental Reformed Theology vs. Broadly Evangelical
 - Traditionalists (prioritize traditional churches) vs. Emergents (prioritize relational churches)
 - Fundamentalists (piety removed from culture) vs. Transformationists (piety traded for culture)
 - Planters (entrepreneurs and innovators) vs. Providers (structure maintainers and shepherds)
 - Younger pastors (desiring mentors and shared leadership with peers, not RE’s) vs. Older Pastors (desiring authority and shared leadership with RE’s)
6. Pervasive Disregard for Eph. 4:15 and Matthew 18 in Discussions of Differences

Our organizational cohesion has not primarily been achieved by shared mission goals, ministry practice, organizational support, worship style, ethnicity, political perspectives or economic status – but by doctrinal agreement. The downside of so valuing doctrine is that we have little tolerance within or without the church for theological variance. Our tendency is not simply to consider those who differ with us wrong – but to consider them bad (because they are obviously “compromisers” or “unbiblical”). It is easy for us to give moral status to our theological perspective – even on secondary issues, and thus rationalize uncharitable characterizations of those who differ (esp. on blogs)
7. Decline of Confidence in Presbyteries for Pastoral Support or Cooperative Ministry
8. Rise of Networks for Fellowship/Perspective Affiliation
9. Disinterest in (and suspicion of) General Assembly Structures, Positions and Participants (dissatisfaction among young Progressives resulting in a few departures and many discussions, as with TR’s in previous decade)
10. Committee/Agency Non-Support
 - Competition re: resources/recognition
 - Doubts re: effectiveness and leadership
 - Concerns re: relational harmony/cooperation
11. Maintaining Biblical Worship with Cultural Diversity

12. Ethnic Homogeneity both in General Membership and Denominational Leadership (with vestiges of racism despite strong Korean presence)
13. Most Members and Leaders with Little Exposure to Other Cultures or the Global Church
14. Significant Consternation Regarding How to Do Theological Reflection in Confessional Church
15. Maintaining Biblical Standards While Encouraging Women to Minister in the Church (and how to discuss this without being caricatured chauvinist or liberal; and how to relate to Evangelicals who differ with PCA standards)
16. Generational Divide among Women re: Responsibilities in Church, Workplace and Home (these are not typically issues related to ordination but to contribution and significance)
17. Loss of Youth (secular culture and denominational disinterest causing many of our children to leave the PCA – and the visible church)
18. Lack of Desire among Young Leaders to Assume Positions with PCA's Most Significant Pulpits and Organizations (perception that they are moribund and dangerous for families)

IV. IDENTIFYING OUR OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CULTURE

The external challenges listed earlier in this plan should not blind us to the opportunities for Gospel progress that are also present. Because all people are made in the image of God the aspects of their culture that oppose the Gospel inevitably disclose aspects of human need. Thus, the fractures of a culture are openings for the Gospel, revealing where hearts are hurting, longing, empty and open. Below are some indications of Gospel opportunities in our culture:

1. **Pervasive Spiritual Longing** Evident in Explosion of Alternative Spiritualities
2. **Relational Longing** (due to loss of community, family and fathering)
3. **Longing for Something “Certain”** Evident in Rise in North American Catholicism, Islam and Ancient/Future Worship
4. **Longing for Racial Reconciliation**
5. **Cultural Regard for Piety** that is Humble and Non-judgmental (e.g. Mother Teresa)
6. **Appreciation for Biblical Preaching** among “Churched” and “Once-churched”
7. **Lack of “Grace Understanding”** in Christian Media and Most Pulpits
8. **Rapid Spread of Global Christianity** (often through Pentecostal prosperity gospel, with which there is growing disenchantment)
9. **Disappointments in Post-modernism**
10. **Loss of Confidence in Economy, Experts and Government**
11. **Lack of Institutional or Denominational Loyalty** (especially among young)
12. **Fear of Terrorism and War**

V. IDENTIFYING OUR RESOURCES/STRENGTHS

The internal challenges listed earlier in this plan should not blind us to the resources and strengths we possess for Gospel progress. God does not leave us helpless in the face of challenges or without resources to pursue Gospel opportunities. The PCA has been richly blessed with means to confront challenges and to pursue Gospel opportunities that God reveals to us. Below are some of the PCA's significant resources and strengths:

1. "They Preach the Bible Here...."
(The vast majority of people who attend our churches are drawn to the PCA because of the belief that we are committed to proclaiming the truth of Scripture.)
2. Theological Cohesion, Soundness and Depth
(Despite our internal debates, the breadth of theological difference among us is quite small on the theological spectrum. In addition, we generally share an appreciation for the necessity of Word and deed in faithful witness of the Gospel)
3. Historical Emphasis upon the Gospel of Grace
4. History and Expectation of Growth
5. History of Valuing Mission
6. History of Valuing Cultural Influence
7. History of Planting Churches (esp. suburban)
8. Large and Well Supported Mission Agency
9. Sound and Solid Educational Institutions (providing value continuity)
10. Theological Respect for PCA in Broader Evangelicalism (except for actual position on women and perceived position on race)
11. Connectional Theology (despite non-connectional practice)
12. Cultural Niche for "Traditional" and "Family Focused" Churches (the downside obviously is our limited connection with non-churched or unwed persons)
13. Significant Denominational Support from Most Mid-size and Large Churches
14. Good Will of Most Congregants and Pastors (delighting to be in the PCA)
15. Large and Well Organized Women's Organization
16. RUF
17. Openness to Ethnic Diversity (despite lack of accomplishments)
18. Key Innovator Churches and Leaders (Perimeter, Redeemer, New City, New Life, Seven Rivers, Harbor, Southwest Church Planting Network, etc.)
19. Support and Growth of National Seminary and Associated Seminaries
20. Pockets of Strong Children and Youth Ministry
21. Willing workers Among Growing Retiree Population
22. Significant PCA Representation in Leadership of Major Evangelical Organizations

VI. Questions to Address in Making Strategic Plans for the PCA

The questions below identify issues that should be addressed by a Strategic Plan for the PCA in light of the preceding analysis. Most questions were suggested by the 2008 Cooperative Ministries Committee after reviewing the analysis. Additional questions were added by 2008 General Assembly commissioners who attended its Strategic Planning Seminar and also reviewed the preceding analysis. The questions are *not* arranged in any priority order.

1. How to Provide Safe Places to Talk about New Ideas to Advance the PCA's Faithfulness to Biblical Belief, Ministry and Mission
2. How to Provide "More Seats at the Table" (especially younger leaders, women, and ethnic leaders) for PCA Ministry Direction and Development
3. How to Identify and Support Agencies/Institutions Most Critical to Our Calling
4. How to Do Mission Corporately and Globally (this includes learning *from* the Global Church, as well unifying ourselves to minister *to* and *with* the Global church)
5. How to Understand, Appreciate and Utilize Our Differences/Gifts
6. How to Work and Worship with Gospel Co-laborers outside the PCA (i.e., working out what Reformed Catholicity means; esp. defining "field" and "fences" of cooperation) in Order to Fulfill the Highest Kingdom Purposes
7. How to Ensure a Common Commitment among PCA Leaders Regarding Theological Approaches to Ministry and Mission
8. How to Inspire Involvement in Corporate Church Structures and Efforts (i.e., Acting in Consistency with Our Connectional Theology)
9. How to Encourage Mutual Love and Respect among Committees and Agencies
10. How to Inspire and Engage Churches and Presbyteries in a Global Strategy
11. How to Prepare Ordained Leadership for Immigrant and Ethnic Communities not Traditionally PCA
12. How to Provide Unity within Variety regarding Worship Principles

VII. Strategic Plans for the PCA

See plans in charted form on following pages.

THEME 1: CIVIL CONVERSATION

Goal: Establish places to enter into civil conversations about the best ways to advance the PCA's faithfulness to biblical belief, ministry and mission.

Means #1: Provide public forums at GA to discuss difficult subjects or new ideas without vote, offering charitable judgments among elders in the fellowship of ministry.

Objectives:

External

- Strengthen church by surfacing appropriate innovation and challenge
- Opportunity to listen to ideas not native to our culture or tradition

Internal

- Avoid unbalanced splinter discussions
- Avoid perception of crushing dissent
- Church able to correct itself, and fulfilling "always being reformed"
- Provide for theological reflection in a Confessional context
- Create enthusiasm & interest for our ecclesiastical assemblies
- Use our doctrinal discussion strengths to explore full dimensions of Biblical faith and practice
- Inspire & unite church re: important new practices, insights, threats or opportunities
- Give minority voices opportunities to make their case without threat
- Ensure wider understanding & commitment to theoretical & theological approaches

Steps:	Resources:	Timing:	Responsible:
1. Establish "prime time" forums at GA with discussion guidelines (e.g. tentative opinions allowed, personal attack prohibited, proof required, nothing chargeable in <i>this</i> context)	1. Room set up at GA	June 2011	Stated Clerk w/ Local Committee
2. CMC identifies up to 5 potential issues each year ; Final topic voted on <i>byFaith</i> online, post CMC	2. Potential topics chosen	January 2011	CMC
3. CMC picks forum moderator to enforce guidelines (2011 ff.)	3. Forum speakers & moderator suggested	Spring 2011	CMC polled by Stated Clerk
4. Encourage presbyteries to suggest topics to the CMC for future GA	4. Forum speakers & moderator invited (after CMC approval)	Spring 2011	Stated Clerk; as to Step 4, Presbytery Stated Clerks and moderators with Presbytery Planning Committees
	5. Written guidelines	Spring 2011	AC drafted; GA approved (overtured by a presbytery, if necessary)

Positives:

- Cross-pollinating with global church
- Fortifies trust & unity
- Surface fresh ideas
- Iron sharpening iron
- Place to encourage multi-generational voices
- Early exposure to potential threats
- Test & get feedback on ideas prior to formal proposals

Negatives:

- Address dissent rather than making it subversive
- Learn corporately
- Opportunity to grow in understanding & appreciating differing opinions/gifts
- Opportunity more accurately to define our theological breadth & boundaries
- Opportunity to dispel rumor, gossip & false characterizations

Negatives:

- Falsehood creep
- Greatest credence to best speakers vs. best ideas
- Potential relational casualties
- Speaker/issue support creating party spirit

Means #2: Encourage similar forums in presbyteries (possibly continuing discussion from each year's GA).			
Steps:	Resources	Timing	Responsible
Encourage annual discussion retreats of presbyteries	One presbytery meeting per year	Annual	Presbyteries
Means #3: Encourage gatherings of non-agreeing enclaves to discuss major denomination-changing or culture-changing ideas and how to live together with differences.			
Steps	Resources	Timing	Responsible
Encourage annual discussions outside GA held on neutral ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overnight travel & hotel - Church meeting place 	Annual	Leader churches, networks and presbyteries acting out of selfless desire to promote the progress of the church

THEME 2: INCREASED INVOLVEMENT

Goal: Increase involvement by providing more opportunities to utilize a greater variety of people and life experiences (especially for younger leaders, women, ethnic leaders, and global church representatives) in the discussions concerning PCA ministry direction and development.

Means (General): Involve representatives from constituencies vital to the church's future in denominational leadership (e.g., advisory voice on committees, sessions, boards, speaking at gatherings, consulted by presbyteries; employed in non-ordained ministries). Utilize the valuable insights of people from different backgrounds as we consider ministry in the context of our changing culture.

Objectives:

External

Have contributions of ethnic minorities & global church leaders expand perspectives, ministries & influence

Internal

- Gain insight & perspective from voices important to church's future
- Retain & mentor future leaders
- Have contributions of women strengthen PCA ministry

- Positives:**
- Retain involvement of future leaders
 - Retain PCA members concerned re parochialism & prejudice
 - Affirm & utilize gifts of women, minorities & global leaders

- Unite our efforts with Spirit's movement in Global Church

- Negatives:**
- Give leadership voice to inexperienced
 - Lose PCA members concerned about compromise & political correctness

Means (Specific #1): Invite younger-generation leaders onto GA boards and committees (especially for specific initiatives).

Objective: Retain & mentor future leaders

Steps:	Resources:	Timing:	Responsible:
Create consensus & approval for this objective by passing this Strategic Plan at GA, affecting nominations at all levels	- Boards & GA Nominating Committee agreement that generational diversity should be considered along with regional and ethnic diversity	ASAP	- Committees & Agencies - CMC accountability review - GA Nominating Committee - Presbytery Stated Clerks and nominations
<p>Positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership succession - Denominational continuity & understanding - Gain multi-generational insights needed for contemporary ministry 		<p>Negatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce unqualified opinions to leadership -Create quota mindset 	

Means (Specific #2): Encourage multi-generational gatherings with mentors

Objective: Same as above

Steps:	Resources:	Timing:	Responsible:
Create consensus & approval for this objective by passing this Strategic Plan at GA	- Organizers - Hotel/travel costs - Meeting places	ASAP	- Committees, Agencies, Institutions - Large churches - Presbyteries - GA organizers - Established leaders - Local churches providing pastors & elders, time, travel & hotel costs
<p>Positives: Same as above</p>		<p>Negatives: Same as above</p>	

Means (Specific #3): Invite ethnic and global leaders to address GA, presbytery and local church gatherings.			
Objective: Same as above			
Steps:	Resources	Timing:	Responsible:
Invite ethnic & global leaders to address GA, presbytery & church gatherings	Travel, housing & honoraria expenses	ASAP	- Committees & Agencies, Presbyteries - Local Churches with Mission Conferences
Positives: See general positives above		Negatives: See general negatives above	
Means (Specific #4): Establish standards for voluntary certification of men and women for specific non-ordained vocational ministries.			
Objectives: - Endorse the importance of lay men's and lay women's gifts in non-ordained church ministry - Gain the insights & contributions of lay men and lay women for our ministries - Protect the insights & contributions of lay men and lay women for our ministries			
Steps:	Resources	Timing:	Responsible:
1. CEP, RUM , Covenant College, & Covenant Seminary jointly test theological & practical preparation 2. Presbyteries & regional CEP Women's Ministries experientially examine & certify	- GA approval of this Strategic Plan	2010	GA
	- Joint meeting of CEP Women's Ministries, Covenant College & Seminary Christian Ed Departments to design testing	2011	CEP Women's Ministries, Covenant College & Covenant Seminary
	- Continuing administration by CEP Women's ministries & Presbyteries	2013	CEP Women's Ministries & Presbyteries
Positives: - See general positives above - Clarify non-ordained ministry functions approved by the church at large - Make vocational ministry for women credible & viable in united church effort - Unite Committees & Agencies in common cause		Negatives: See general negatives above	
Means (Specific #5): Formalize a CEP Women's Ministries organization for women in vocational ministries.			
Objectives: Create avenues for women's input, encouragement and leadership development for appropriate PCA ministry efforts			
Steps:	Resources	Timing:	Responsible:
Formalize CEP Women's Ministries for women in vocational ministries	CEP Women's Ministries Provision at Annual Leadership Training	2011	CEP Women's Ministries
Positives: See general positives above		Negatives: See general negatives above	

Means (Specific #6): Develop a credible and rigorous alternative credentialing process for men from disadvantaged constituencies, enabling them to attain the same ordination standards expected of a traditional M.Div. seminary graduate.

Objectives: - Significantly enable the PCA to minister Reformed distinctives beyond North American, Anglo suburbia
 - Learn from leaders outside our tradition how to minister Biblically beyond our cultural models

Steps:	Resources	Timing:	Responsible:
1. Have a joint committee of Covenant Seminary, CEP, MNA and MTW establish certification standards for non-traditional clergy preparation that includes formal & prior earning assessment	Meeting places, travel, housing expenses	2010	Covenant Seminary, CEP, MNA, & MTW
2. Have GA approve appropriate guidelines for presbyteries to consider in evaluating alternative ordination preparation		2011	GA
3. Establish an endorsement coordinator (similar to Chaplains & RUF) under MNA to advise ordinands & presbyteries regarding appropriate non-traditional credentialing paths.	MNA fundraising	2011	MNA
4. Facilitate recognition of appropriate alternative credentialing programs by establishing standards for GA endorsement of all programs and seminaries by a joint committee of MNA, Covenant Seminary, CEP & MTW; these standards would advise presbyteries re appropriate alternative credentialing standards	Same as for step #1 above	2011-2012	GA, Covenant Seminary, CEP, MNA, & MTW.

Positives: - Prepare the PCA to minister beyond the as-of-2030 Anglo minority in North America
 - Provide an expanded & diverse Reformed clergy for ministry challenges of burgeoning Christian Church worldwide
 - Unite GA Committees & Agencies in common cause

Negatives: Potential or perceived “shortcuts” in ministry preparation will produce an ill-prepared and/or perceived “second-class” ministry

THEME 3: IN GOD'S GLOBAL MISSION

Goal: Determine how to participate corporately in God's Global Mission with exemplary unity, humility, and effectiveness, bringing sound biblical understanding to the largest expansion of Christianity in world history.

Means (General): Provide internal means and will to make the PCA a significant contributor to God's Global Mission (includes learning from the global church, as well as unifying ourselves to minister to and with the global church).

Objectives:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>External</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate meaningfully in the largest expansion of Christianity in world history - Salt the world movement of Christianity with sound Biblical teaching - Learn from the global church Biblical truths beneficial to our own growth in God's purposes | <p><u>Internal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a sense of unifying purpose - Refine/strengthen PCA structures & practices to fulfill that unifying purpose |
|--|---|

Means (Specific #1a): Identify and support national and international efforts that develop centers of influence to engage the culture with Reformed thinking and leadership (e.g., church-mercy-evangelism, church-school-community mission, church-arts/media-outreach, church-university ministry-discipleship)

(Specific #1b): Fund joint research of Covenant College and Covenant Seminary, CEP, MTW, and MNA re: the most effective centers of influence to engage the culture with Reformed thinking and leadership and how to multiply them beyond the PCA.

- Objectives:**
- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support most Biblical means for spiritual & cultural transformation: the church - Make the Gospel spiritually transformative by church ministry of Word & sacrament - Make church ministry credible by addressing fallen aspects of the culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transform culture by the body of Christ's salt & light ministry through the culture, affecting souls & practices - Unify PCA committees & constituencies in a truly Reformational mission effort |
|---|---|

Steps:	Resources:	Timing:	Responsible:
1. GA seminars coordinated by MTW, MNA, RUM, CEP Covenant College & Covenant Seminary on the potential influence of Gospel eco-systems support	GA seminar time slots, Committees & Agencies personnel commitment & time	2010-2011	Covenant Seminary, Covenant College, MTW, MNA, RUM, CEP
2. MTW, RUM, & MNA propose focus on Gospel eco-systems for GA approval	MTW, RUM & MNA & leader churches personnel commitment & time	2011-2012	Covenant Seminary, Covenant College, RUM, MTW & MNA with leader churches, GA
3. MTW, RUM, & MNA 10-year plan for Gospel eco-system development	Major fundraising & personnel resourcing MTW, MNA, RUM, Covenant College & Covenant Seminary	2011-2021	Covenant Seminary, Covenant College, RUM, MTW & MNA & leader churches
4. Covenant College & Covenant Seminary report & publish research regarding multiplying Gospel eco-systems			

- Positives:**
- Multiply Gospel saturated churches
 - Multiply Gospel-understanding believers
 - Contribute to Gospel-transformation of cultures

- Negatives:**
- Potential distraction from eternal priorities
 - Potential drift into social gospel

<p>Means (Specific #2): Develop a “unifying” (<u>not</u> unified) funding means to support PCA ministries and mission culture; features to include:</p> <p>a. Ability for all churches, presbyteries, delegated REs and TEs to participate (e.g., annual registration fees to support AC, erase GA fees);</p> <p>b. Necessity of all in the PCA to participate at a meaningful level;</p> <p>c. Non-participants having voice but without vote at GA;</p> <p>d. All Committees and Agencies other than AC funded (continuing current practice) by Partnership Shares and Ministry Asks.</p>			
<p>Objectives: <u>External</u></p> <p>- Provide adequate funding for corporate efforts in ministry & mission</p>		<p><u>Internal</u></p> <p>- Negate self-defeating individualism of many PCA churches</p> <p>- Create a denominational “can-do” spirit for God’s purposes, making zeal for being PCA infectious and inspiring for present & future generations</p>	
Steps:	Resources:	Timing:	Responsible:
1. Pass this proposed Strategic Plan at GA	CMC vote & Admin. Committee propose to GA	2010	CMC thru Admin. Committee
2. AC propose necessary <i>BCO</i> and <i>RAO</i> changes for GA approval		2011	Stated Clerk and AC
3. Stated Clerk’s Office assess & record registration fees; determining TEs eligible for higher court vote (all would have voice) and GA fee waiver; collecting addresses for free <i>ByFaith</i> provision.		2012	Stated Clerk
<p>Positives: - Funding for PCA coordination</p> <p>- All churches participating in a united effort that benefits all and the whole church’s mission</p> <p>- Ministers acting in concert with their Presbyterian convictions</p> <p>- Help present and future generations grasp the power of “working together” in God’s mission</p>		<p>Negatives: - Stress pastors and churches in economic distress</p> <p>- Constrain some churches to support efforts not appreciated</p> <p>- Seem to abandon “voluntary” nature of historic PCA affiliation</p> <p>- Potential loss of churches not wanting to participate in PCA connectionalism</p>	
<p>Means (Specific #3): Provide mechanism to identify and support <u>only</u> GA ministries most critical to our calling.</p> <p>The mechanism for evaluation is to be worked out in proposal form by the Coordinators, referred to the CMC, and presented to the GA within 3 yrs.</p>			
<p>Objectives: <u>External</u></p> <p>- Focus limited resources on ministries most needed & able to fulfill our calling</p>		<p><u>Internal</u></p> <p>- Continuously structure GA Committees & Agencies for ministries the church believes are “doing the job” that most needs doing by those most able to do it</p>	
Steps:	Resources:	Timing:	Responsible:
1. Adopt the Strategic Plan with the principles of unifying funding approach.	CMC & GA approval of Strategic Plan <i>RAO</i> provisions	2010	CMC, GA
2. If needed, revise <i>RAO</i> to set up procedure and sequence for committee and agency evaluation process			
	CMC, Stated Clerk & AC efforts & time to design	2011-2013	CMC, Stated Clerk & AC
	GA approval	2013	GA

On Site: REVISION

<p>Positives: - Build confidence in denominational efforts - Provide level of accountability that diminishes cynicism & increases support - Provide mechanisms to alter ministries that do not have significant denominational support</p>		<p>Negatives: - Politicize Committees and Agencies - Distract Committees & Agencies from mission - Fuel culture of fear & suspicion</p>	
<p>Means (Specific #4): Partner with national and international ministries with whom we can most effectively participate in God's global mission by: a. seeking union or appropriate levels of cooperation with Reformed movements making Gospel progress and in harmony with our ethos and goals; b. regularly evaluating our participation in those organizations with whom we share doctrinal history and ministry priorities, in order to help ensure each organization's ministry effectiveness; c. finding new ways to give away our knowledge and resources to bodies of believers being spiritually blessed.</p>			
<p>Objectives: <u>External</u> - Serve God's global mission with greatest effectiveness - Make as meaningful as possible the oneness of the Body of Christ - Help others</p>		<p><u>Internal</u> - Learn from others - Cooperate with others whose efforts will work synergistically with ours for Gospel progress - Define field and fences of appropriate cooperation with bodies whose Gospel development would benefit by our involvement even if they are still organizationally or doctrinally developing</p>	
Steps:	Resources:	Timing:	Responsible:
1. GA approve Strategic plan		2010	
2. Convene a committee of MNA, MTW, Stated Clerk, Covenant College & Covenant Seminary to determine: a. Field & fences of appropriate cooperative & union efforts b. Appropriate parties or target efforts for cooperative ministry efforts	Transportation, housing, meeting costs	2010-2011	MNA, MTW, Covenant College & Covenant Seminary
3. Present to CMC plans for cooperative policies & plans for GA approval		2010-2011	GA, Inter-church Relations, MNA, MTW
4. CMC forwards policies & plans to AC for GA approval		2011	Committees and Agencies reporting to CMC AC & GA
<p>Positives: - Create enthusiasm for participation in God's global purposes - Demonstrate unity of the Body of Christ - Gain Gospel understanding - Benefit from Christ-like selflessness - Further our Gospel efforts by participation with those who can help us progress - Salt the global mission with Reformed theology - Expand our understanding of, and ministry among, those in rapidly expanding global church - not being left behind in parochial concerns</p>		<p>Negatives: - Potential compromise of doctrinal distinctives - Use of PCA resources for non-PCA efforts</p>	

VIII. Conclusion

The mission and calling of the PCA must be seen both in the light of our Reformed heritage and in the light of the needs of our rapidly changing world. Reformed theologian Bill Edgar captures these priorities well in these words from *Truth in All It's Glory* that may surprise us, will encourage us and should challenge us:

Today the Reformed faith is truly worldwide. In its different modes, the Reformed outlook has found its way into more cultures and places than any other expression of the Christian faith, including the Roman Catholic tradition. From the outset, the intention and deepest motive of Reformed thinking has been global. Since the Second World War, and now into the twenty-first century, Reformed theology has interacted with numerous world trends. One of them is the continuing process of independence from the West. No longer tied to the civilizing arm of colonial expansion, evangelism and missions have developed an independent character, with national leadership. Missions today are more a partnership than a one-way street.

Every indication points to the shifting center of gravity in the presence and life of the Christian church from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere. The Reformed churches are no exception. In some cases, extraordinary growth has characterized them on various continents, even as they decline in the West. Today, the Reformed churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America far outnumber the churches in Europe, North America, South Africa and Oceania. This growth is especially felt in the major cities of the world....

Reformed theology has unique experience in formulating matters of faith in multiple contexts. The Western churches, having a certain longevity and having faced modernity, with more or less success still have something to say to their non-Western partners. And while Reformed theology in the future should by no means be restricted to its Western formulations, even less to its sixteenth- or seventeenth-century documents, it would be absurd to neglect them and reinvent the wheel. Together, then, the churches around the world, particularly the Reformed churches, should address the perennial task of being in the world but not of it. They are to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:15-16)....

The task is also daunting because while the occasion for doing theology is the particular and historical circumstances of those who are generating it, the aim of theology is to speak God's truth. The world in the Northern Hemisphere and in the twenty-first century is no longer the world of the sixteenth-century

Reformation. We are postcolonial, the Cold War is over, human rights are fully recognized by international organizations, we are laden with technology, we face the AIDS pandemic, third-world debt, terrorism. A theology that does not grapple with those realities may have virtue, but it will not be fully Reformed, in that it will not apply the eternal Word to the changing world. At the same time, a theology that does not construct a universal, normative account of God's revelation will be less than good theology. It will have no real authority, because it will ultimately begin from our circumstances and attempt to make sense of God's Word in the their light, rather than beginning with God's Word and making sense of the circumstances in its light (pgs. 91-98).

The circumstances facing the PCA are changing more rapidly than even these wise words describe. We can either wilt before the challenge or count it our privilege to unite as a church to learn afresh how to live the truth of the Gospel before and for this world. This strategic plan is designed to be an initial step in considering how to participate meaningfully in God's mission for the world of our time and for generations to come. We have been given the great grace of a Reformed heritage, the great blessing of churches committed to Gospel progress, and the great aid of the Spirit of God. To these gifts God has also added the privilege of scriptural revelation telling us that the Church of Jesus Christ is the most powerful agent of transformation for the world. God has blessed us to be a faithful arm of that church. May he now give us grace to live, learn and disciple in faithfulness to this knowledge with the resources he has given for his glory.