

# WHAT IS THE VISION PROJECT?



What we're now calling "The Vision Project: Belong, Become, Beyond" began in June of 2018 when Erin's Session members began **strategy development**, including an examination of:

1. Erin's Identity: **Vision, Mission, and Ideal Profile**
2. Erin's **Values**
3. The Big **External** Questions facing Erin
4. The Big **Internal** Questions facing Erin

## ERIN'S IDENTITY: VISION

Session first examined Erin's Vision statement. The Elders decided the Vision statement was still relevant today, and very much expresses who we want Erin to be. Yet all agreed that our Vision, while recited frequently on Sunday mornings, had not been given the necessary structure to succeed.

**This is our Vision for Erin Church:**

*Unified in Christ, we actively seek to create harmony  
in a diverse community through compassion, mutual respect, and love.*

*Our Vision needs Strategies, a Structure, and Support to get us to where we want to be.*

## ERIN'S IDENTITY: MISSION

Next, we examined our Mission statement. While some wanted to update the language, all agreed the statement describes what Erin's members are called to do.

### **This is the Mission of Erin Church:**

*The mission of Erin Church is to be a lighthouse of faith in Jesus Christ,  
A beacon of God's Word, and a channel of the Holy Spirit for our community and beyond:*

Through worship, as we glorify and praise God;  
Through discipleship, as we learn and grow together as a family of faith;  
Through fellowship, as we break bread together and support one another;  
Through creative expression, as we share our faith through the arts;  
Through stewardship, as we cultivate our resources, property, and people;  
Through outreach, as we share God's love and help those in need.

## ERIN'S IDENTITY: IDEAL PROFILE

Session discussed what might be an ideal profile for Erin and came to an agreement around several points.

### What we want Erin to look like:

Total Membership: 300 members

Active Membership: At least 65% of members

Church Leadership: 12-member Session

Staff: Maintain the staff required for shepherding and leading specialty programs or age groups

Church Operations: Primarily a volunteer organization – all members working

Resources: Active members giving (*tithing*) their time, money, talents, and other resources

Programs: Maintain current programs and increase opportunities for spiritual growth

Discipleship: Active members engaged in growth toward mature discipleship

Age Diversity: More equally distributed from youth through seniors

Ethnic Diversity: More members from minorities

Social Diversity: More members from across the socio-economic spectrum – more non-traditional members

Geographic Diversity: More members from the Erin neighborhood, while also drawing from across the area

Community Engagement: More engagement with the community, so that we are known for serving others

## ERIN'S VALUES

As a key part of the strategy development, Session determined 11 lines in the sand, or values, on which they were not willing to compromise. All strategies developed had to align with these values.

### We Affirm:

1. **The Bible as the divine authority of our Christian faith, as individually interpreted through the Holy Spirit.**
2. **The formal continuation of Erin congregation as part of the PCUSA.**
3. **The right of each member, on a journey of faith, to develop an individual theology.**

Continued

## ERIN'S VALUES

4. Our common Christian identity as presented in *A Brief Statement of Faith* in the *Book of Confessions*, amidst the diversity and disagreement in the church and the world.
5. The global mission of the church as summarized in *The Great Ends of the Church*, Section F-1.0304 of the *Book of Order*.
6. The principles and actions in the Vision Statement of Erin Presbyterian Church as the identity to which we aspire.
7. The principles and actions in the Mission Statement of Erin Presbyterian Church as the basis for our local ministry.

Continued

## ERIN'S VALUES

8. Conducting our five ministries in ways consistent with our faith, God's timeless message, and the Mission of Christ as presented in *The Notes of the Reformed Church*, Section F-1.0303 of the *Book of Order*.
9. An openness to new ways of conducting our five ministries that may enable us to minister more effectively as our environment changes.
10. Building and nurturing relationships with each other, the community, and God as central to our faith and Erin's greatest strength.
11. God loves all people equally and calls us to love all people equally and demonstrate our love through attention to their wholistic needs.



## THE BIG **EXTERNAL** QUESTIONS CRITICAL TO OUR CHURCH

Based on our research, Session found dozens of external issues facing Erin. The following 9 were deemed the most critical to Erin, requiring a strategic response.

### HOW DO WE RESPOND TO...

**1** Non-believers who do not see the relevance of organized religion or local congregations?

**3** Prospective members and professing Christians who see relevance, but do not prioritize involvement with a local congregation?

**2** Believers who do not see the relevance of church membership or engagement with a local congregation?

**4** Those who see mostly hypocrisy in “church-going” Christians and discount church involvement because of it?

## THE BIG **EXTERNAL** QUESTIONS CRITICAL TO OUR CHURCH

### HOW DO WE RESPOND TO...

**5** The needs in our community and beyond, in a time when social safety nets rather than churches are known for meeting needs?

**6** Non-believers and skeptics who need to be more open to the possibility of God, His love for His church, and for each of us individually?

**7** Those around us who have faith, but are not fully formed in their faith and are easily lead in many directions?

**8** The current, more narcissistic approach to living that places the best interest of self and family above that of others, contrary to the teaching of Christ?

**9** The big church, big staff, big program mentality and instead market the value of a small, relational church where each one is loved, supported, and valued?

## THE BIG **INTERNAL** QUESTIONS CRITICAL TO OUR CHURCH

Based on experience and church records, Session raised dozens of internal issues. The following 12 were deemed the most critical to Erin, requiring a strategic response.

### HOW DO WE RESPOND TO...

**1** The need to increase age diversity in our congregation by attracting young adults and young families?

**2** The need for members to be more committed, engaged, and involved, making serving—not just attending—a higher priority so that the work of Erin is done by many and not just a few?

**3** The need for members to prioritize spiritual growth and become mature disciples, and take advantage of available growth opportunities through both study and service?

**4** The need to become a tithing congregation, with members engaged in and educated about the work of the church so they want to invest more financially?

## THE BIG **INTERNAL** QUESTIONS CRITICAL TO OUR CHURCH

### HOW DO WE RESPOND TO...

**5** The need to unapologetically increase our expectations of church members and teach the commitment and responsibilities of discipleship?

**7** The need to live our mission, realize our vision, and actively do God's work in the world? And the need for our members to understand that sharing our faith is central to being Christian?

**6** The need for church leadership to better balance Erin's short and long-term needs so current operational and ministry needs are met as well as the longer term, strategic needs of the church and its survival?

**8** The need to better educate and prepare elders to serve without making the role overly cumbersome and unattractive to prospective Session members?

## THE BIG **INTERNAL** QUESTIONS CRITICAL TO OUR CHURCH

### HOW DO WE RESPOND TO...

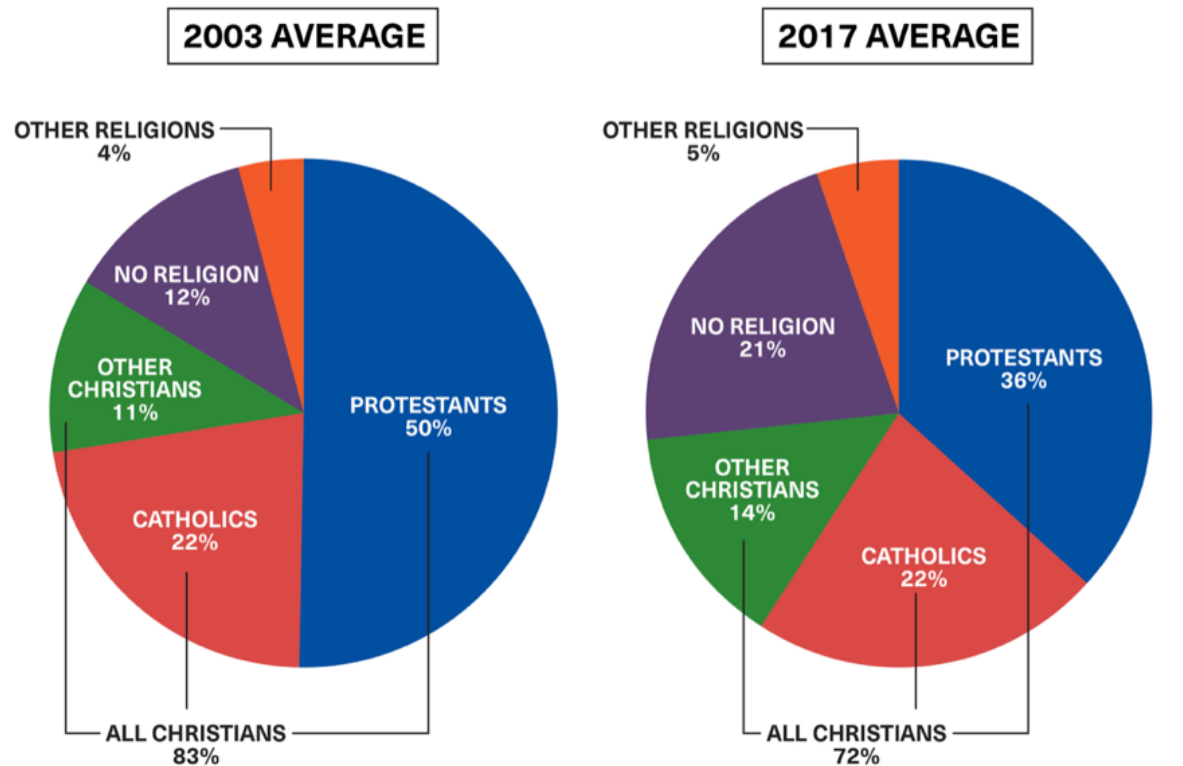
<p>9 The need to think communally, as a body of believers, seeking solutions in the best interest of the whole rather than our best interest, and to structure discussions and decision-making to support balanced input?</p>	<p>11 The need to openly discuss differences in respectful, non-judgmental ways that demonstrate genuine unity, love, and support for one another in our socially, economically, politically, geographically, and theologically diverse congregation?</p>
<p>10 The need to teach our members and prospective members what it really means to follow Christ and be His disciple, and to encourage Erin members to live lives that exemplify the teachings of Jesus?</p>	<p>12 The need for a more active, engaging worship that attracts new members and inspires, uplifts, and instructs current members, preparing them and motivating them to reach out to others?</p>

## NOTABLE POINTS FROM THE RESEARCH

*Our research indicates declining church affiliation.*

- Mainline Protestant churches in the U.S. are rapidly losing members, declining 62.5% since 1982.
- Between 2002 and 2016, the *no religion* category jumped from 10% to 18% and today accounts for 23% of the population.
- Less than 20% of Americans regularly attend church.
- PCUSA membership is down to 1,415,053 from 2,313,662 active members in 2005.

## RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION



SOURCES: ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST AND ABC NEWS POLLS



## NOTABLE POINTS FROM THE RESEARCH

*Our research also indicates some congregations are thriving and growing.*

- Congregations engaged in the community and known for their caring spirit, service to the needy, support, love, and acceptance are attracting new members even among millennials, the group with the fewest regular attenders.
- Members modeling the discipleship that Jesus taught in ***all*** aspects of their lives are attracting new members to their congregations because others want to emulate their lives.
- Congregations who maintain a strong focus on the gospel message and the relevance of Christian faith and prayer continue to grow.

## OUR RESPONSE TO THE RESEARCH AND ERIN'S CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Strategy is required to respond to the big issues facing us as a congregation.

### WHAT IS STRATEGY?

*A coordinated set of actions designed to create and sustain relevance, health, and market distinction as the organization's internal and external environments change so the mission is advanced and the vision is achieved.*

*Strategy is a means of mobilizing an organization to get to its future.*



## OUR STRATEGIES

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our strategies for attending to the future of Erin Church over the next 3 to 5 years are:

### Strategy 1

*Instilling in Erin's members and friends, as seekers together, a true understanding of and subsequent active commitment to what it means to be and to live as Christ's disciple.*

### Strategy 2

*Sharing with the community the ministries that God has called Erin to as a body of believers, and living as disciples of Christ in all aspects of our individual and diverse lives so that others see Jesus in us.*

## OUR FUTURE

Successfully implementing these strategies and achieving our Vision depends on *us*, and on our doing three things:

**BELONG** to the church, by making a commitment to be present, grow spiritually, build relationships, and find places of service in the church.

**BECOME** mature disciples as defined by Christ in the Gospels, and live as Christ's disciples in all aspects of our lives.

Go **BEYOND** our walls to engage with the community in service and outreach, with care and support, acceptance, and love, just as Jesus did.

# STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT PRESENTATION:

## WHY IS ALL THIS NECESSARY?

COMING ON MAY 12.

[ERINPRES.ORG/THEVISIONPROJECT](http://ERINPRES.ORG/THEVISIONPROJECT)

Where we'll address all your burning questions, like...

- *Why is all this necessary now?*
- *Can't we just keep doing what we are currently doing? We seem to be OK.*
- *What do you mean by "Mature Christian"? I think I am pretty mature now.*