

## **A Proposal for Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church to become a PC(USA) Matthew 25 Church**

In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus asks us to live our faith by serving and actively engaging with people who are marginalized and in need. In the last few years, our world has greatly changed. We have become more aware of injustices, inequities and suffering in our community. We are called now, perhaps more than ever, to be disciples to ALL of Jesus' people.

PC(USA) invites us to become a Matthew 25 church as "we recognize Christ's urgent call to be a church of action, where God's love, justice and mercy shine forth and are contagious. And we rejoice how our re-energized faith can unite all Presbyterians for a common and holy purpose: our common identity to do mission." When we actively engage in the world around us, our faith comes alive, and we wake up to new possibilities. By accepting the Matthew 25 invitation, we become a more relevant presence in today's world. At SAPC this embodies our mission statement: To be passionate disciples, ministering in a changing world, together.

After review of other local Matthew 25 congregations, the needs of our community, and the capabilities of our congregation, the task force recommends that our primary focus as a Matthew 25 church be the issue of Poverty in our Community. Poverty, by definition, is lack of access to resources, including material, social, emotional, and spiritual. Many of our current mission projects already address the consequences of poverty, so this focus lets us build upon activities in which we are already engaged. Through Matthew 25, we plan to look more closely into those many faces of poverty. We seek not only to meet immediate needs but to begin the hard work of determining the reasons for those needs. We will collaborate with community partners to develop creative solutions for complex issues, just as Christ calls us to do. This requires us to work directly with those who are experiencing poverty in their own lives. By honoring and respecting the dignity and humanity of all God's people, we hope to bring more understanding, change, and love to our community and our world.

In our focus on Poverty in our Community, we will use the following criteria in determining what issues to pursue:

- To work toward a unified church-wide focus for our Matthew 25 activities, coordinating the activities of the Mission and Outreach Committee, the Social Justice Committee, Adult Sunday School classes, Presbyterian Women, Youth, and other groups.
- To solicit input and participation from members of our congregation and our SAPC committees, for issue choice and implementation
- To communicate frequently with our congregation, highlighting the many faces of poverty.
- To connect identified issues to Scripture and worship services.
- To involve our youth in both planning and action.
- To provide multiple ways to participate in Matthew 25 activities, offering varying time commitments, encouraging multigenerational participation, and facilitating participation by homebound congregants.
- To emphasize face-to-face interaction with community partners.
- To approach issue engagement from a stance of abundance by maximizing the use of our community's assets of time, talents, knowledge, creativity, facilities, hospitality and generosity.
- To work collaboratively with partner organizations that look different from us (board, leadership diversity), in ways that are strengthening and empowering for all involved.

- To seek collaboration with other churches and faith traditions on issues of common interest, realizing we are stronger together and don't need to duplicate efforts.
- To foster a deeper understanding of issues through community interaction, dialogue, listening and learning opportunities.
- To break the paradigm of server and served and the aspects of classic charity that are demeaning or disempowering.
- To advocate for changes in public policy where needed to address issues of injustice and inequity.
- To address the effects of racism related to poverty that still exist in our world.
- To enter into partnerships with organizations that are fiscally responsible.
- To establish an ongoing task force that will coordinate the Matthew 25 activities of all church committees and groups, meeting quarterly to evaluate our successes and opportunities for improvement.

You may ask: Why Matthew 25?

Because our Lord calls us to!

Therefore, the SAPC Matthew 25 task force respectfully proposes that Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church become a PC(USA)-designated Matthew 25 congregation.

Respectfully submitted, The Matthew 25 Task Force  
Michael Schley, Jeff Adkins, Scott Hum, Katie Hirscher, Charlotte Sullivan, Elizabeth Lusk, Scott Pollock,  
Carolyn Brueggeman, Cari Newton and the Rev. Dr. Tom Watkins

## Questions & Answers

### What is the Matthew 25 invitation?

It is an initiative conceived of by our denomination. Convicted by Matthew 25 and specifically verses 31-46 both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor.

### What areas does the denomination suggest focusing on?

- **Building congregational vitality** by challenging people and congregations to deepen their faith and get actively and joyfully engaged with their community and the world.
- **Dismantling structural racism** by advocating and acting to break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.
- **Eradicating systemic poverty** by working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

### Are we required to base our program on these focus areas?

No, churches have the freedom to engage in Matthew 25 based on the needs of their communities and the capabilities of their congregations.

### How many churches are currently involved?

Currently participating are:

966 Congregations (49 in NC)

76 Presbyteries

10 Synods

54 Other Groups

### What is required to become a Matthew 25 congregation?

Simply sign up with PCUSA and pledge to be a Matthew 25 congregation.

Then share your success and experience with a 250 word essay, with optional photos and videos so others can be inspired by your journey.

### Why should Saint Andrews become a Matthew 25 Church?

1. Because the Lord calls us to care, to act, to serve.

2. It communicates to our members and those in our community that serving our brothers and sisters in need and ending injustice is important at Saint Andrews.

3. It connects us with other churches who also value these things and offers an opportunity to build networks and partnerships that can be mutually beneficial.

4. The process of making the decision to become a Matthew 25 church is an opportunity to engage and excite all of the members of Saint Andrews around a central purpose.

5. Engagement of the whole Saint Andrews congregation and committees especially those of Mission and Outreach, Youth, Social Justice, Presbyterian Women, Adult Ed, Welcome and Hospitality and Worship and Music in the planning and selection of issues of common concern can foster church unity, vitality and discipleship across generations.

6. Offers a chance for us to bear witness to Christ's love in the world and to positively impact on our world and the people in it.

**If we become a Matthew 25 Congregation, does it mean that we will have to discontinue other programs that Missions and Outreach, Social Justice, and other groups are engaged in?**

No. Each committee and group will remain free to continue their support and participation in the activities that they decide are most worthy. For example, it is likely that Missions and Outreach will continue supporting international missions and that Social Justice will continue its work in Gun Violence Prevention. That being said, all church groups will be encouraged to strengthen their activities that relate to Matthew 25 theme of "Poverty in our Community" where possible.

**Is there a current-year budget impact to becoming a Matthew 25 church?**

No. We envision Matthew 25 activities being funded from current committee budgets.