

# **2017-18 Map**

**Council affirmed: June 19, 2017**

What follows is an attempt to set out what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us. We discern our direction together for many reasons: 1) We want to know what to do, 2) We want to share our life and mission in a truthful, practical way, 3) We want to teach each other how to listen to the Spirit and speak the truth in love, 4) We want to include the most recent person in our life-giving process. Our map does not describe all we do, but it gives our diverse, region-spanning, neighborhood-linking church a common way to explore and express God's love.

How we arrived at this Map:

The leaders listen to the Body. 56 cells spent 1-2 weeks each listening for areas of our greatest health, what people in our region are thirsting for, and how the Spirit is inspiring us to respond to those thirsts. The pastors distilled input from the cells into categories, which structured working groups during an open Discernment Meeting held by our Leadership Team. The pastors used notes and lessons to instigate offline and online discussion of three different drafts of our goals before our four-part meeting to fine-tune ideas. The budget and Map proposal went out ahead of the Council meeting who affirmed these tools as our direction.

## **Who we are**

*We are a unique people who have been formed into a missional culture. We are "good trees" determined to "bear good fruit." Here is how we briefly describe who we have become:*

### **Who we are meant to be**

We are a circle of hope in Jesus Christ:  
*a movement of cells multiplying congregations,  
a people called to reconciliation,  
an opportunity to explore and express God's love.*

### **What we are given to do**

We create an environment where people can connect with God and act for redemption.  
*Loving the thirsty people of our fractured region,  
we keep generating a new expression of the church  
to resist and restore with those moved by the Holy Spirit.*

### **Convictions that drive us**

*These eleven statements point to the heart of our purpose and mission, stated above. They express something of what fuels us, how we see God refining us and shaping us, and how we want to live in light of the Bible and in tune with the Spirit of Jesus.*

- Jesus is best revealed incarnationally
- We are called to move with what the Spirit is doing next
- We are meant to go deep with God
- We must be doers of the word

- Generating justice and hope in our neighborhood must beat the heart of us.
- We are called out to be a living organism, building community together in love
- Dialogue keeps us connected and protects our gravity
- Fomenting diversity and reconciliation is at the prophetic heart of our gospel
- We expect people to express their gifts, talents, art and worship
- Sharing our resources brings freedom and unleashes power
- Leadership is a team effort

*See the "Basic Lore" section at the end to find out more about what is behind our character as a people. The convictions above are fleshed out in the "proverbs" we have been collecting since 1995.*

### **The facts about who we are (June 2017)**

*Circle of Hope has become more than a sum of her cells or just the people who attend our Sunday meetings - although those partners are certainly primary. We foster new good business, create dozens of jobs, provide healing spaces, and proliferate ways for others to feel God's love in useful ways both regionally and around the world through our compassion and mission teams, MCC, and other partners.*

By the numbers

- We are one church:
- 56 cells with about 405 participants.
- 5 meeting sites with 710 regular attenders (173 are children)
- 391 members joined in covenant
- 17 Compassion Teams
- 1 business we own, 1 connected by a team
- We collectively own 5 buildings
- 8 Mission Teams
- 363 givers of record in 2016, 359 givers of record YTD (May 31, 2017)
- 4 pastors, 1 development pastor, 1 director of operations, 1 teaching pastor, 1 church planting pastor, 1 affiliated pastor, 1 Communications Assistant, 1 Operations Manager, 1 Sites Manager
- 30 Circle Thrift employees, 12 Circle Counseling therapists

### **Our goals for 2017-18**

*Most of our goals are first or next steps toward our long-term vision. Some are meant to be completed in one year or with one action. None of these descriptions are meant to describe the full plan to meet each goal. Each bold header represents a focus. Every individual, cell, and team in our church can work these directions. They include some goals that we will do together, and are meant to spur teams to make their own goals directed towards these three foci.*

#### **Make it easy for people to get next to Jesus**

- Plant three cells "from scratch" in each of our congregations.
- Multiply a third of our cells.
- Create and use new podcasts and video to expand the footprint of our storytelling
- Take worship outside through pop-up Sunday meetings, liturgical protests/demonstrations.

#### **Share gifts that encourage and equip**

- Create a process to use the Mutuality Fund for childcare to help parents work, play, and participate in the life of the church.
- Communicate our Gifts for Growing and resources on [thewayofjesus.circleofhope.net](http://thewayofjesus.circleofhope.net) in new ways that help people connect.
- Enjoy a year long celebration of the compassionate work our people do professionally.
- Translate the Cell Plan into Spanish.

**Use the strength we have to do daring things**

- Leverage the resources and assets we have to make our spaces more useful.
- Start at least two new church-owned businesses and continue to explore creating jobs, make new relationships, and generate funds.
- Create a strategy for long term meeting spaces for our congregations on North Broad and Ridge Ave.

## **Our mutual finances**

Our primary financial resources come from partners in our mission sharing regularly in our common fund. The buildings and businesses we own as well as grants add to our sources. Circle of Hope is essentially one church with one bank account - our assets are all held in common. We have distinct accounts and budgets for specific purposes such as the Mutuality Fund and Circle Thrift. We want each congregation to be capable of sustaining itself with mature followers of Jesus for its own health and towards including the next person.

<b>SOURCES</b>	
2017 Operating Budget Sources	\$988,692.76
2017 Reserves Fund Budget Sources	\$123,994.57
2017 Circle Thrift Budget Sources	\$990,344.00
2017 Circle Kids Budget Sources	\$0.00
2017 Circle Spaces Budget Sources	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,103,031.34</b>
<b>USES</b>	
2017 Operating Budget Uses	\$985,593.85
2017 Reserves Fund Budget Uses	\$174,739.60
2017 Circle Thrift Budget Uses	\$996,176.00
2017 Circle Kids Budget Uses	\$0.00
2017 Circle Spaces Budget Uses	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,156,509.45</b>
<b>NET INCOME/LOSS</b>	
2017 Operating Budget	\$3,098.91
2017 Reserves Fund Budget	-\$50,745.03
2017 Circle Thrift Budget	-\$5,832.00
2017 Circle Kids Budget	\$0.00
2017 Circle Spaces Budget	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>-\$53,478.12</b>

Our budget proposal [here](#).

## **Ongoing long-term goals.**

*Our general goals are broadly described in our plans: the Cell Plan, The Sunday Meeting Plan, and The Inclusion Plan. The Bible guides individuals in the way they should go. So our Map does not attempt to be comprehensive. This Map represents special guidance we have received to focus our mutual efforts as a church.*

There are many parts of Circle of Hope that instigate goals: the Leadership Teams, the congregations, the mission and compassion teams, and the businesses. They all reflect our mutual covenant, our overall purpose and mission and the guidance of the Pastors and Council.

The long-term vision in this section is in response to how the Holy Spirit is leading now. We do not really know what tomorrow holds, but we act as if we will have time to fulfill the course on which we are directed. Some of these goals will take five years or more, some may be completed much sooner than we expect. Each one is presented as a response to a challenge and each one has aspects to be completed within the three main foci of our life and mission:

By July of 2022,

#### **Make it easy for people to get next to Jesus**

- ❖ Our Events Team(s) help us get to know creatives in our region, resulting in collaboration with individuals and groups from a plethora of backgrounds as well new connections and partners.
- ❖ People follow us on social media for encouragement and stimulation regionally and in other parts of the world. We provide tools for the spiritual journey for those who meet face-to-face as well as those far away.
- ❖ Our Sunday meetings grow in adult Regular Attenders by 5% each year, resulting in over 700. When a congregation gets to 200 adult Regular Attenders they are in the process of multiplying.
- ❖ Healthy cells grow and multiply a net 20% increase each year resulting in 138 cells with 20 CL Coordinators.

#### **Share gifts that encourage and equip**

- ❖ Our trainings include leaders and attendees from outside Circle of Hope. Our worship music, videos, and podcasts are useful to both followers of Jesus and the spiritually curious around the world.
- ❖ We are known throughout the region as a force for good, and we share stories of transformation with joy.
- ❖ We are exploring multiplications up and down our Delaware River Watershed (North of NYC through NJ and PA into MD and DE). Other church planters are adapting our methods and strategies for church plants in other areas.
- ❖ Adults who grew up from childhood as part of Circle of Hope are leading cells, Sunday meetings, and other areas of our common life.

#### **Use the strength we have to do daring things**

- ❖ The Hub continues to grow in number of staff and potency, helping hold together our cell multiplication movement, congregational health, and enterprise as our whole church.
- ❖ We are proliferating Good business, creating five more church-owned businesses and helping inspired people start more. We are known as a good employer and job creator.
- ❖ Our teams that lead us in confronting climate change have provided opportunities for energy alternatives and other habits that form newsworthy experiments.
- ❖ Our teams that connect us to local schools helped us make a big difference in the lives of students and the conditions of their education.

### **Basic Lore**

*These are basic statements about who we are and what we care about. The “proverbs” of Circle of Hope expand on the convictions that drive us. They begin to describe how we see ourselves in Christ and form*

*the basis for how we decide what to do. This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it a replacement Bible. We expect to keep refining our understanding as God keeps inventing us.*

### **Jesus is best revealed incarnationally**

- The church exists for those yet to join.
- We receive the “Great Commission” (Matt 28:18-20). Any believer, who is not doing their part in the “family business” of redeeming the world, is missing the point of their ongoing existence.
- Following the example of Paul, we have a 20/20 vision of ministry, teaching one another “publicly,” and from “house to house” (Acts 20:20).
- Our deliberate attempts to make disciples are “incarnational,” friend to friend, so we accept that what we do will almost never be instant.
- People *should* be skeptical if our message does not originate from a community that demonstrates the love of Christ.
- When individualism rules the culture, being the church is countercultural.
- Life in Christ is one whole cloth. As we participate in and love “the world,” we bring redemption from the Kingdom of God to our society. Jesus is Lord of all, so we have repented of separating “sacred” and “secular.”
- We are “world Christians,” members of the transnational body of Christ; concerned with every person we can touch with truth and love.
- One's sexual orientation is not a barrier between them and God. The love of Jesus makes no distinctions. We are one in Christ.

### **We are called to move with what the Spirit is doing next**

- Those among us from “traditional” Christian backgrounds are dying to our precious memories of “church” in order to bring the gospel into the present with great flexibility.
- Words of wisdom and knowledge are given in many ways, but always within accountable relationships.
- We intend to keep all the great things God has given through the church of the past and be totally at home in our own time, ready and able to relate to the people of our day.
- Like any healthy organism, we grow. So we are always preparing to birth a new cell, plant the next congregation and generate the next venture of compassionate service.
- Following the Spirit is risky business, calm seas do not make good sailors.

### **We are meant to go deep with God**

- To have a full relationship with God, one must live in an environment where worship can be learned, the spiritual disciplines gained and spiritual warfare fought.
- Prayer is the key to fulfilling our mission of transformation.
- Solitude and silence are crucial tools for experiencing God's presence.
- Without worship, a person shrinks
- Accepting failure and moving on in hope is basic to living in the grace of God.
- How we relate sexually is a spiritual, communal matter and can't be reduced purely to a discussion of private expression or individual rights.
- As the world pulls us toward “virtual” we will keep struggling to live rooted, in real time.

### **We must be doers of the word**

- The Bible should be known and followed, and that is a group project.
- Jesus is the lens through which we read the Bible.
- The truth in and from Jesus is revealed in many ways: through the Bible, through the members of the body, through the creation, through the Holy Spirit.
- Being successful is faithfully following the teaching of scripture according to one's ability and one's role in the body.
- We are disciplined for mission, not just for personal growth.
- We learn best person to person, not program to person.
- In the postmodern era it is even more important to speak the truth in love, and a love in Christ.

### **Generating justice and hope in our neighborhood must be at the heart of us.**

- We hope compassion is among the first things people notice about us.
- We are united in demonstrating the gospel by acting for justice, not merely talking about it
- We are obliged to speak out against unjust laws and practices that oppress people and ruin creation.
- We do not generally hand out resources; we extend a resourceful hand.
- In the United States the sin of racism impacts all we experience. It is a fact of life for which the dominators are accountable.
- Our compassion teams and mission teams have the “right to die,” that is, they are not obligated to create a permanent program with interchangeable participants.
- In a culture deformed by violence, proactive peacemaking transforms our individual fears and faithfully witnesses to the Prince of Peace like nothing else.
- Claim your capacity, friend. You are no longer condemned to rely on justice granted by the Great Other.
- Wealth and power reduce sympathy for the poor and powerless. A marriage between unfettered capitalism and piety makes the Lord’s words inconvenient at best and heretical at worst.

### **We are called out to be a living organism, building community together in love**

- We abide by the “Great Commandment” (John 13:34-5). Self-giving love loosens the truth locked in our desires.
- Our cells are the basic components of our living body in Christ. In them, Jesus is our “agenda.”
- Our cells are the primary place where we help one another grow as disciples, face to face.
- Living in covenant, like a family with a common Father, is basic to being a Christian.
- The Love Feast is us being a unified people, a family reunion, and celebration of being knit together as one church.
- The church is not a “thing” that does things; it is not a building. *We* are the church and we support one another as Jesus expresses himself through us.
- A congregation and a cell are always larger and deeper than their meeting or meeting place.
- We are living as a created organism, not creating a religious organization.
- We are called to develop a trust system.
- When we talk about accountability, we are talking about mutually helping one another fulfill what we have already agreed to be or do.
- Forming cells and teams is a basic way we keep learning how to express who we are and what we do as people called into a new community in Christ.
- Parents have the unique privilege of creating a family where grace and truth may be known. The church surrounds them with support and everyone plays a part in each child’s protection and growth.
- Our community is based on our ongoing dialogue not law, on mutuality not rights, on self-giving love not mere tolerance.
- It’s better to be reconciled than to be right.

### **Dialogue keeps us connected and protects our gravity.**

- Everyone is recovering from the sin addiction; expect conflict.
- God’s grace leads us through the danger and opportunity of conflict; we can be affirming *and* assertive, concerned with relationships *and* goals.
- Forgiveness is the root of our love; because we are flawed, loving each other is not always easy. We practice Matthew 18. Our body is held together by a dialogue of love.
- Truth without loves kills, while love without truth lies.
- Engaging in healthy dialogue is what keeps us real. We want everyone among us to experience respect and understanding as they explore what they think and feel.
- Jesus is living the greatest mutiny ever – we should not waste our rebellion on each other.
- Everybody gets listened to, but people who make and nurture disciples and who make love happen get listened to more.
- Don’t look for a new rule to solve a relational problem or a policy adjustment to produce integrity.

### **Fomenting diversity and reconciliation is at the prophetic heart of our gospel.**

- We are always trying to stretch across barriers: across racial/ethnic, class and cultural divides.
- Racial reconciliation is a matter of demanding justice, not just peace.
- A gospel that does not reconcile is no gospel at all.

- We will do what it takes to be an anti-racist, diverse community that represents the new humanity.
- All cultures are fallen, yet Jesus reveals God in all of them. The church does not need to force people to leave all aspects of their culture in order to worship God through Jesus Christ.
- Welcoming the “stranger” is at the heart of being a Christian. Hospitality exposes the fear of the giver and receiver to the transforming touch of God.
- We stretch ourselves to worship with diverse styles. God is transnational, transcultural, even transhistorical.
- We are diverse in many ways and we will cross boundaries to become more so. Don't bean count us.
- True inclusion requires relational work not simply institutional recognition.
- The church's task is neither to destroy nor to maintain the various labels that divide the world but to offer a new self in Christ that is deeper than the definitions of the dominators.
- Bringing people to Jesus is our primary goal. How someone identifies him or herself when we meet them is less important than making room for them in God's Kingdom.

### **We expect people to express their gifts, talents, art and worship.**

- It is essential to discover, develop and use one's spiritual gifts.
- God is an artist. The artist who follows the Creator creates to reveal the glory of God, too.
- Since we are each and all temples of the Holy Spirit, art among us is never merely a matter of “self-expression.”
- Respect for gifts and abilities is not reserved for older people.
- Women and men are co-bearers of the image of God and therefore fully gifted and responsible to lead, teach and serve.
- Our public worship strives to be in public language focused on those yet to join in, but not restricted to that.
- One doesn't need to be smart or completely trained to be a fulfilled Christian.
- We admit that we are less of a “safe place” for people who don't want to take initiative, own their dignity or make commitments.

### **Sharing our resources brings freedom and unleashes power.**

- We share our resources of time, money and love person to person, with the leaders, between congregations.
- All our money belongs to God; the percentage we share in our Common Fund reflects our mutual commitment to be an authentic church.
- Minimally, members of our covenant share in our public meeting times, participate in a cell, express themselves in service and contribute to our Common Fund.
- As part of our obligation to mutually share resources with the poor and lost, we invest at least 20% of our Common Fund income in causes beyond our basic common needs.
- We live out our goals according to what we have, not what we should have. Don't try to live off the holes in the Swiss cheese.
- We are called to owe nothing to anyone but love. We are determined not to be debt slaves and determined to share with abandon and fully participate in the imagination and responsibility of partnership in Christ.

### **Leadership is a team effort.**

- A leader is always part of a team, is always a mentor, and is always preparing his/her successor.
- Leaders listen to the body and to God; their function is discernment as much as direction.
- Our basic mission is to build cells and our primary leaders are deployed and trained for that work. We wait for people to take the lead in further enterprises, or we don't do them.
- Nothing should be left to fester until the pastors smell it.
- Passionate leaders who discipline themselves according to their hard-won mutual agreements are key to accomplishing great things.
- Our cells, congregations, teams and leaders are all building the same house, but are all uniquely inspired, gifted and assigned. Categorizing them as things or positions filled by people wrongly subjects the users to their tools.

**See the book based on the proverbs: [A Circle of Hope](#).**

See the site that describes [The Way of Jesus](#)

