

TRANSITION PLAN FOR BLENDING SOUTH & NEW LIFE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is meant to serve five purposes:

- To explain to members of the Presbytery (through the Committee on Ministry, the Presbytery Trustees, and the Stated Clerk) the vision that our two churches have for our future together;
- To record the agreements reached by the Sessions of South and New Life Presbyterian Churches about our shared future, and outline a process for achieving our goal of blending our two congregations
- Announcing a proposed date for the blending and dissolution to occur;
- To ask for suggestions and the prayerful counsel of our brothers and sisters in Christ as we launch on this next, historic part of our journey together. and
- To share the joy that we feel from having worked toward a blending of our churches for the last two-and-a-half years. Reaching this point in our process – the beginning of the final steps, we hope – is profound, sacred and joy-filled.

BACKGROUND

From July of 2015 through January of 2017, South and New Life Presbyterian Churches combined certain of their respective resources and activities into a unique pilot program through a covenant agreed to by our two Sessions; we shared personnel (Pastor, Mission Coordinator, and Music Director), programming (combined participation in various Acts of Faith, support of each other’s ministries, combined worship services and seasonal potlucks), and resources (using the New Life building for combined activities, and South providing office support – photocopying, bulletin development, phone messaging, etc.) as needed.

The personal connections between the two congregations were growing and deepening when we agreed to pause in order to honor New Life’s independent process for selling its building. Once that was completed, both Sessions were excited to meet with Laurie Ferguson, a consultant working with Riverside Neighborhood churches through the Duke Grant, and to map out a plan for transitioning, or as we prefer to call it, blending our congregations and advancing our shared vision.

32 This document is our Transition Plan for Blending South and New Life Presbyterian Churches. It
33 has been drafted by both Sessions, and edited by them with important and appreciated
34 clarifications by others in the Presbytery.

35 New Life has, for some time, adopted South's Acts of Faith (AoF) Model of Ministry, and, while
36 historically touching on youth and seniors with its outreach, currently has four AoF's in place
37 (see below under MINISTRY). South's Acts of Faith number sixteen (some of which are seasonal).
38 Of the twenty combined Acts of Faith, six are New Worshiping Communities and several have
39 had participants from both congregations.

40 South recognized, even before the possibility of New Life joining them surfaced, that it is
41 important to have activities where members of all the Acts of Faith can experience the "larger
42 church," hence the development of our All-AoF potlucks, the AoF Council, combined Christmas
43 Eve and Holy Week services, etc. during the last two years. New Life has been an active
44 participant in each of those combined activities.

45 As we anticipate the legal dissolution of New Life, and envision "blending" the two
46 congregations, here are the decisions that our two Sessions have agreed upon thus far. It is our
47 hope that with the help of the Committee on Ministry, the Presbytery Trustees, and the Stated
48 Clerk of the Presbytery, we might be able to obtain approval of our blending at the January
49 2018 Presbytery meeting, if the way be clear, and immediately thereafter complete the
50 process.

51 A preliminary timeline appears at the end of this Transition Plan.

52

53 WHAT WE MEAN BY BLENDING

54 We are referring to the process of our two congregations combining as a "blending" because
55 that is the word that resonates with us the most. It is not a "merger" in the traditional sense
56 because that would require both congregations to dissolve and mutually form a new entity. It is
57 not a "yoked parish" because we're not maintaining separate entities and dual Sessions. It is
58 not an "acquisition" and some of us *really* respond negatively to thinking of one group being
59 "assimilated" or "absorbed" into the other because to view it that way would be to ignore the
60 Acts of Faith Model which calls for no centralized identity. Rather, we are a series of smaller
61 ministries, i.e. the Acts of Faith Community.

62 We identify most strongly with the image of a blended family ... forming a new, stronger
63 identity together than either of us is able to hold separately. (The totality is greater than the
64 sum of the parts.) The desired outcome of the blending of these two churches is to arrive at
65 one united congregation, called to missional work through our many Acts of Faith. We
66 complement each other demographically, geographically, and theologically.

67 We recognize that such a blending is *not* the same as a church ending and members migrating
68 to another (as with Dewey and Irondequoit Presbyterian Churches) because the church that is
69 “ending” (i.e. New Life) is doing so only in the legal sense. New Life’s ministry and mission will
70 continue through their Acts of Faith, which are all alive and vibrant ministries, and they will
71 become part of South’s larger Acts of Faith Community.

72 We recognize the challenges that exist in creating such a new kind of relationship for two
73 congregations. The Acts of Faith model is only a few years old. Blending two churches together
74 around this model has never been done before, so we are intent upon walking the path
75 carefully and not “getting ahead of Grace with an imprudent eagerness, but quietly awaiting its
76 unfolding before us” (to quote a maxim of the Sisters of St. Joseph). For that purpose, we are
77 grateful to our Presbyterian polity and the roles of the Committee on Ministry, the Trustees,
78 and the Stated Clerk because, after all, many heads are better than one ... and many people
79 praying for discernment is better than just one or two.

80 Our plan for moving forward leans heavily on a few key factors and actions as we develop our
81 new collective identity. These are what we consider the “glue” holding us all together:

- 82 • Jesus Christ, the Head of our Church and of this new blended entity,
- 83 • Blending the Sessions,
- 84 • Blending the Deacons,
- 85 • Expanding our Pastors’ commitment to practicing mutuality, and using their ways of
86 relating to each other as a model for our congregational interactions,
- 87 • Creating and living within a unified budget,
- 88 • Promoting all twenty of our Acts of Faith as equal expressions of “church,” and
- 89 • Having leadership of one of South’s current Acts of Faith vested in a New Life Elder.

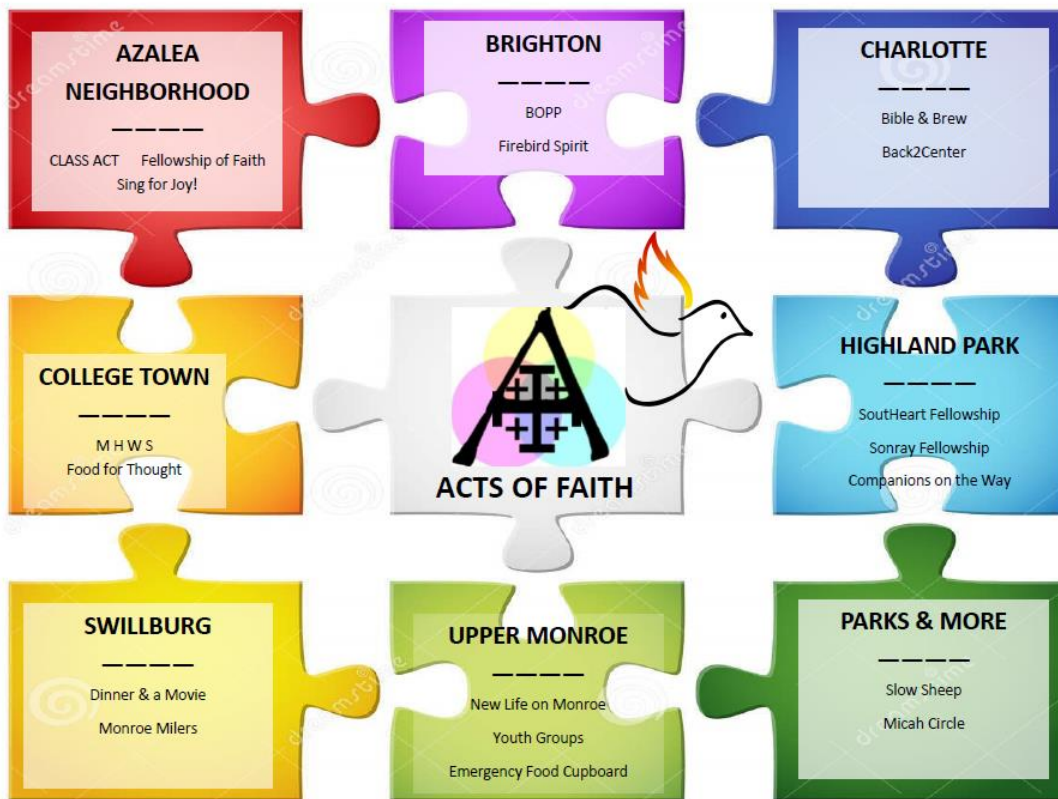
90 Just as adopting the missional Acts of Faith Model requires a different mindset to understand it,
91 so, too, will our two churches need to adopt a different understanding of Self, i.e. a different
92 self-definition or self-concept. After the blending, South Presbyterian Church will offer six

93 worship services throughout the week. Each will be an individual Act of Faith. Every Act of Faith,
94 whether started by New Life or South will be part of our collective identity.

95 We recognize that South has been walking this Acts of Faith journey longer than anyone else,
96 but South is committed to maintaining New Life's sense of responsible presence in, and
97 honoring their call to, ministry in the Upper Monroe Neighborhood.

98 With the addition of New Life's Acts of Faith on Monroe, the Acts of Faith Community will
99 provide a Presbyterian presence in Azalea, Brighton, Charlotte, College Town, the Highland Park
100 Neighborhoods, and Swillburg, as well as in several Monroe County parks.

The 2017 Acts of Faith Community in and around Rochester



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101

102 We hope and believe that the foundational work we have done together over the last two-and-
103 a-half years, learning about each other, sharing worship and potlucks, engaging in Acts of Faith
104 together, sharing pastoral care together, receiving Deacon training together, and periodic joint
105 Session meetings, has positioned us well for this final move toward a shared and blended

106 identity, for we believe that as a single, united entity, we will be better able to share the Good
107 News in Monroe County.

108 GOVERNMENT

109 In order to accomplish this blending, certain changes in structure and behavior must be made.
110 The first is in our governmental structure, and as with every endeavor of this magnitude, “the
111 Devil (or, we prefer to think that GOD) is in the details.”

112 We propose that the date of legal dissolution for New Life Presbyterian Church be no later than
113 February 28, 2018.

114 On February 1, 2018, the membership that wishes to join South Presbyterian Church will be
115 transferred to South’s rolls (see MEMBERSHIP section below), with a service of welcome
116 celebrated in both Fellowship of Faith and New Life on Monroe on Sunday, February 4, 2018.

117 A Special Meeting of the Congregation will be held Sunday, February 4, 2018, at a time and
118 place yet to be determined for the purpose of electing a Nominating Committee, making
119 amendments to South’s *Administrative Manual* regarding the composition of the Nominating
120 Committee, Session and Deacons as part of this blending, and celebrating our blended identity.

121 The Annual Meeting of South Presbyterian Church will be held on February 25, 2018 in the
122 Brighton Town Park Lodge, with worship and a potluck beginning at 5pm. During that time, the
123 new officers will be elected, and the regular work of the church will continue with our
124 expanded membership and blended boards.

125 For the time being, we propose that this blended entity be known as South Presbyterian Church
126 and the Acts of Faith Community. We mention this here because we have discussed the
127 possibility of adopting a new name at some point in the future. South has learned through its
128 Acts of Faith that group identity emerges over time as an organic process and should not be
129 imposed prematurely or artificially.

130 New Life recognizes that the Acts of Faith Model is South’s creation and asked South to share it
131 with them in 2015. Many of South’s Acts of Faith do not identify – or may identify only
132 tangentially – with South Church, even though it is South who funds and oversees each of them.
133 Every Act of Faith is unique in its own identity, its own manifestation of the Spirit. Each has its
134 own distinctive name and logo design representing its work and mission. Each develops its own

135 leadership model (leaders, co-leaders, management team, etc.). These facts cause us to pause
136 and wonder how significant, if at all, the shared name of the legal entity might be.

137 New Life's name will still be present in the Upper Monroe Neighborhood through its Sunday
138 Worship Act of Faith: New Life on Monroe.

139 Naming will continue to be part of our discussions for the next few years, but for now, we agree
140 to simplify this blending by maintaining South Presbyterian Church as the legal entity
141 coordinating the Acts of Faith Community.

142

143 **SESSION:** Currently both New Life and South each have six ruling elders on their Sessions.

144 South's government is unicameral, with the Session serving as the Board of Trustees. We see
145 no need to change this.

146 We propose that South expand its Session to not less than seven, nor more than nine, and that
147 for the first three years the Nominating Committee shall be requested to identify two to three
148 candidates for the position of Elder who are former New Life members in order to gently
149 address the blending with New Life and especially to provide an intentional mechanism for the
150 oversight of asset integration. Building trust – especially around money – starts at the top ...
151 and in this case, the Sessions have been living into trusting each other for the last two-and-a-
152 half years.

153 South is committed to providing an intentional presence of New Life's former members on the
154 Session during our transition period. Beginning the fourth year, no restrictions will be placed on
155 Session membership originating from either congregation.

156 The newly blended Session will spearhead the update of South's *Administrative Manual* during
157 their first two years as a blended entity.

158 Currently, the President of the South Presbyterian Church Corporation is elected annually, and
159 that practice will continue for the time being. Any member is eligible to be elected President
160 (see MEMBERSHIP section below), so this may or may not continue to be someone from the
161 current South Church.

162 South's Clerk(s) of Session is the Secretary of the corporation. We have yet to determine if
163 there will be Co-Clerks of the newly configured Session.

164 The Treasurer(s) of the congregation is also the corporate officer. Co-Treasurers are a possibility
165 for our new blended entity. The two current Treasurers have already met on their own, and
166 New Life’s Treasurer is now a part of a blended Finance Committee which should serve to
167 facilitate the blending.

168 With the proposed dissolution date of January 31, 2018 and the first blended Annual Meeting
169 set for February 25, 2018, we will proceed to a joint government through elections at that time.
170 The Session will set the date for Ordination and Installation of officers following their
171 examination and training period, but no later than March 31, 2018.

172

173 **DEACONS:** Currently, New Life has four deacons and South will have four in 2018.

174 Both congregations are divided into Caring Teams which the Deacons minister to. We propose
175 a combined Diaconate of eight people working in pairs (one from each congregation), assigned
176 to four caring teams made up of members from both churches. This balanced membership of
177 the new Board of Deacons can be accomplished through normal attrition and elections. Initially,
178 there will be three classes of Deacons (at least one from each church in each class). The length
179 of time that this mandated balance will continue will be determined by the Session at a later
180 date.

181 ***It Should be Noted: (1)*** Part of the reason that we are reluctant to dictate long-term guidelines
182 for the memberships of the Session and Deacons is because our Presbyterian polity recognizes
183 that officers are not representative of specific subsections of the church membership.

184 ***(2)*** Another reason is because looking ahead, it may well be that Elders and Deacons may come
185 to serve through non-Sunday worship Acts of Faith. For instance, an Elder from Back2Center in
186 Charlotte may never have been a part of either originating congregation and we are mindful of
187 leaving room for the Holy Spirit to work in such cases. ***(3)*** Thirdly, South has learned through
188 Fellowship of Faith and its increasing percentage of Meadows residents who are members of
189 that Act of Faith, that issues like “distribution” and “balance” work themselves out gradually
190 during the first couple of years if we just stay out of the discussion and let it happen organically.

191

192 **NOMINATING COMMITTEE:** Since South elects its Nominating Committee annually, a new one
193 will be elected at a Special Meeting of the Congregation after New Life members have joined
194 South in February of 2018. The elected Nominating Committee will insure that people from

195 their respective prior congregations who feel called to serve will become part of the
196 discernment and election process. The initial Elders and Deacons to serve on combined boards
197 will be nominated by the blended Nominating Committee on a slate to be presented at the
198 Annual Meeting on February 25, 2018.

199 South's *Administrative Manual* dictates that the Nominating Committee be made up of: 1
200 sitting Ruling Elder who chairs the committee, 1 sitting Deacon, and 3 At-Large members. We
201 all agree to maintaining that structure going forward.

202 To intentionally provide for fair representation among the leadership, we propose that for a
203 period of three years at least two of the five positions of the Nominating Committee will be
204 offered to former New Life members. After that time, no criteria beyond membership in the
205 blended congregation shall exist. This amendment to the *Administrative Manual* will take place
206 at the Special Meeting of the Congregation in early February when the Nominating Committee
207 is elected.

208 FINANCES

209 Both churches have received the proceeds from the sale of their respective buildings. South's
210 assets are invested with the Presbyterian Foundation, and they receive cash infusions from
211 their investments as needed. Paul Grier, the Vice-President for Institutional Services at the
212 Foundation, visited South in June of 2017 during which time South's Session and members of
213 their Resource Development & Strategy Planning Team asked him about the best ways to
214 handle combined assets if, and when, the time comes.

215 His counsel was to develop a unified 2018 budget together even before the blending has been
216 realized. This budget will support all the Acts of Faith of both congregations, and will combine
217 both churches' assets in a single account as soon as the way be clear. This would, of course,
218 increase the amount of earned interest proportionately. (It should be noted that South has
219 expanded its Finance Committee and incorporated the New Life Treasurer and Bookkeeper as
220 of October of 2017 to help draft the 2018 Unified Budget. Other New Life members are
221 welcome to serve on the Finance Committee as well.)

222 Documents from the Foundation (from mid-September) that outline the current state of
223 South's portfolio have been shared with New Life.

224 Both Sessions are in agreement about following Mr. Grier's advice and, after final approval by
225 Presbytery, completing steps for combining their assets to support all of our collective

226 ministries and staffing needs. Mr. Grier will be visiting again on January 17, 2018 to outline the
227 details of his suggestions. He stands ready to assist in providing the wording of motions, etc.
228 that need to be made – as he did in facilitating South’s initial investments. (The Foundation’s
229 familiarity with Presbyterian Polity and their ease with talking with Presbytery Trustees and
230 investment personnel are some of the reasons that South chose to invest with the Foundation.)

231 The Session will continue to work with the Resource Development & Strategy Planning Team
232 which is made up of community members and not limited to South membership. This Team
233 makes periodic recommendations to the Session and engages the Finance Committee as
234 needed in terms of long-range financial planning. Their primary responsibility is to resource the
235 Pastor as she continues to work on developing a model for financial sustainability to support
236 the Acts of Faith Model of Ministry. The Team welcomes participation of any New Life member
237 (or friend) who feels called to join them.

238 Because New Life’s ministry and mission will continue – under the auspices of the blended
239 South Session – both Sessions are requesting that New Life’s assets be assigned to South at the
240 time of New Life’s dissolution. All finances will be under the supervision and authority of
241 South’s expanded Session, using the formula for Session membership outlined above in the
242 GOVERNMENT section.

243 Both Sessions recognize the need for trusting each other. South’s part of the blending includes
244 assuming the responsibility for the New Life Acts of Faith. In so doing, South Church is saying
245 that it is morally committed to supporting and continuing those ministries as long as they are
246 viable. Any decision to restructure or discontinue any of New Life’s Acts of Faith would come
247 from the newly blended Session as is the practice in determining the future of any and all of
248 South’s Acts of Faith.

249 Likewise, New Life has articulated its trust in South to use the funds that New Life will add to
250 South’s portfolio in support of our mutual ministries.

251 We are of one mind and heart: when this blending is completed, we will be one congregation
252 with one Session, one Board of Deacons, and one budget supported by our combined funds.

253

254 MEMBERSHIP

255 Prior to the dissolution of New Life, their members will be invited to join South through Letters
256 of Transfer. All New Life members will be invited to complete a written form stating their
257 intention to either 1) transfer their membership to South Presbyterian, 2) transfer their
258 membership to another church to be specifically named, 3) not transfer their membership, in
259 which case it will be held by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery until such time that a transfer is
260 requested. (Note, this is the process that was successfully executed with the Dewey members
261 joining Irondequoit.) Those who wish to join South will then be enrolled as Active Members of
262 South Presbyterian Church on, or before, the dissolution of New Life and will be celebrated
263 during worship at both Fellowship of Faith and New Life on Monroe.

264 MINISTRY

265 Both South and New Life employ the Acts of Faith Model of Ministry which is based on de-
266 centralized, multi-sited ministry growing out of grass-roots needs. Each Act of Faith is designed
267 to be a free-standing entity, loosely connected to the other Acts of Faith through quarterly AoF
268 Council meetings that include leadership development training and seasonal social/fellowship
269 opportunities.

270 The AoF Council reports directly to South's Session. South's Associate Pastor is the Acts of Faith
271 Coordinator for our collective roster of AoF's. Acts of Faith elect their own representatives to
272 the AoF Council and determine their own Mission with the approval of the Session.

273 At the dissolution of New Life's charter, their four Acts of Faith (**New Life on Monroe** – Sunday
274 worship at Cobbs Hill Manor; **Monroe Milers** – youth running program; **Children & Youth**
275 **Ministry** – meeting seasonally; and Outreach Programs including, but not limited to, the
276 **Emergency Food Cupboard** which continues to be housed in the former church building at 243
277 Rosedale Street) will come under the South umbrella. Their administration, financing and
278 planning will be overseen by the newly expanded Session. Narrative budgets for each of the
279 four programs have been provided by the New Life Treasurer to be incorporated into the 2018
280 unified budget. South's Associate Pastor will continue to provide direct pastoral care to the Acts
281 of Faith that originated from New Life.

282 Acts of Faith initiated by New Life will be treated the same as those initiated by South.

283 It should be noted that one of the Acts of Faith initiated by South, **the Micah Circle** which is
284 devoted to peace and justice work, is now headed by New Life's Elder, John Thomas. We see
285 this as another important piece in our blended identity.

286

287 STAFFING

288 Since the office work for both congregations is currently provided by South's BOPProgram
289 (Blended Office Partnership), there will be no staffing changes related to that aspect of
290 blending. The one piece that *will* change when the churches combine their finances is that New
291 Life will no longer be paying \$500/month as a BOPProgram Partner. Instead, their expenses will
292 be rolled into South's office expense line items with no corresponding income line. While this is
293 one area where we expect South's expenses will increase, the number of people pledging and
294 supporting the joint ministry will also increase when the New Life members transfer their
295 membership.

296 During the transition period, the Pastoral staff will essentially remain unchanged, but a
297 realignment of hours and a change of title will require some help from COM. Rev. Katrina Hebb
298 is half-time at South as a Stated Supply Associate Pastor and is paid half-time by New Life as a
299 Stated Supply Pastor. She will become *full time* Stated Supply Associate Pastor of South when
300 the blending occurs, if the way be clear. Conversations are already underway with our COM
301 *liaison* to make those changes of title happen smoothly.

302 New Life's contribution for Katrina's salary and pension is currently paid to South so that one
303 paycheck is written to Rev. Hebb, and one payment is made to the Board of Pensions on her
304 behalf. Under the new arrangement, Katrina's title will remain as Associate Pastor of South but
305 will move to full time upon the successful blending of the two congregations.

306 Currently, Rev. Hebb's duties at New Life include overseeing the four New Life Acts of Faith.
307 Those responsibilities will still be hers. Additionally, her work with the New Life Deacons will
308 expand to include shared oversight (with Rev. Deborah Swift) of the combined Diaconate, and
309 as an Associate Pastor, she will attend South's Session meetings. Rev. Swift will continue as the
310 called and installed pastor of South Church, so there will be no change in the amounts paid to
311 the two pastors for salary or benefits.

312 Since South is presently responsible for the payments to the Board of Pensions for both pastors,
313 this shift should be seamless.

314 Also, it should be noted that both Rev. Swift and Rev. Hebb have begun peer coaching with the
315 Reverend Ann Philbrick with the expressed purpose of facilitating this blending while
316 developing the new Associate Pastor position at South. Our collective thanks to the Presbytery
317 for facilitating and paying for this coaching for our two leaders.

318 The Minister of Music for both South and New Life, will continue in his position, as will South's
319 Director of Operations.

320

321 COMMUNICATION PLAN

322 Our Communication Plan is three-fold: communicating with the Presbytery through COM,
323 Trustees, Stated Clerk, and the Presbytery Leader; communicating with the current
324 membership of South and New Life; and communicating our new identity with the outside
325 world.

326 **PRESBYTERY**

327 It is our desire to fully involve the Presbytery of Genesee Valley in our transition from two
328 congregations into one blended congregation. This involvement began two-and-a-half years
329 ago when the two churches entered into our Covenantal Agreement for sharing personnel,
330 programming, and resources. It continues today through the ongoing involvement of our COM
331 and Trustee *liaisons*, sending copies of correspondences and drafts of our plans to those
332 individuals, and seeking their guidance and involvement as we prepare for the next step.

333 Members from both Sessions and both pastors stand ready to meet with COM, Trustees, or any
334 combination thereof to offer further explanations of our vision for blending.

335 **MEMBERS**

336 Both New Life and South have active email platforms for disseminating information to their
337 respective memberships.

338 South has started publishing a seasonal (printed) newsletter that showcases each of the Acts of
339 Faith and their recent activities. Frequent *eNews* issues, Pastor's blogs, and weekly
340 announcements in worship bulletins also inform the larger AoF population about opportunities
341 to participate in church-wide and denominational-wide activities throughout the week. All now
342 regularly include information about Acts of Faith initiated by New Life as well as those started
343 by South.

344 The two Sessions have sought suggestions from the Presbytery's Trustees, COM, and Stated
345 Clerk. They met concurrently to draft this Blended Plan together, and it is being shared with
346 members of both churches in advance of their respective dates for their congregational
347 meetings to vote on the blending. This finalized Blending Plan will be sent to the Presbytery
348 committees and officers, and communicated to the Active Memberships of both churches along
349 with the recommendation of their Session to complete the blending process.

350 Additionally, representatives from all of our combined Acts of Faith held their quarterly AoF
351 Council meeting on October 14, 2017 at which time the Sessions shared an update on the
352 preparations.

353 Announcements were made during the two Sunday worship Acts of Faith: Fellowship of Faith
354 and New Life on Monroe. These are the venues which field the largest numbers of church
355 members for each congregation.

356 On December 1, 2017 all Acts of Faith will be celebrating Advent Worship and Potluck at the
357 Brighton Town Park Lodge. It will be hosted jointly by the two churches, and prior to that, the
358 two Boards of Deacons will again hold their Deacon training retreat.

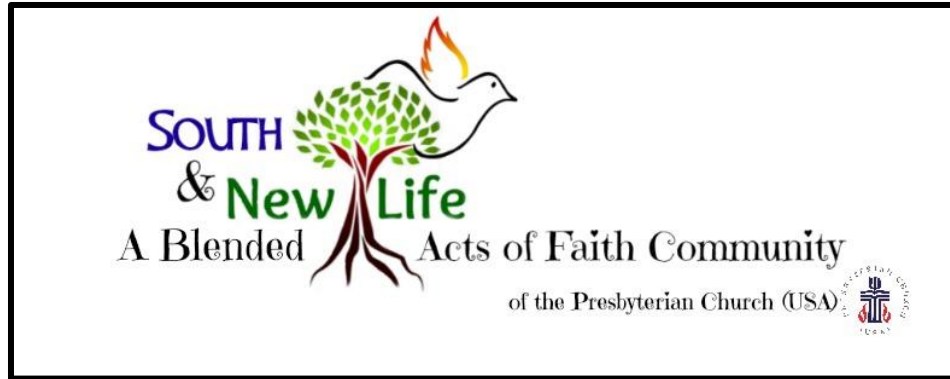
359 The plan (see TIMELINE that follows) called for the two Sessions to again meet once the
360 suggestions had been returned from COM, Trustees and the Clerk. That meeting took place on
361 November 28, 2017.

362 We welcome the attendance by any Presbytery staff, as well as members / liaisons of the
363 Trustees and COM to any or all of our meetings, worship services and Acts of Faith.

364

365 **OUTSIDE WORLD**

366 Communicating our blending to the outside world has already begun. We are currently using
367 this logo on emails as it combines the New Life Tree of Life, South's Firebird Spirit., and the
368 PC(USA) seal.



369
370 Additionally, we are in the process of combining the websites into one and migrating New Life's
371 information into South's format. A new template has been chosen for www.SouthPC.org and
372 will represent to the world a "new look" for our churches. Those logging in to
373 www.NewLifePresbyterianChurch.org will find themselves seamlessly rerouted to South's
374 website where announcements of activities in both churches are beginning to populate the
375 calendar and graphic sliders of those announcements appear on the home page. South's IT
376 person is also their Director of Operations, Kevin Fuller, and he is overseeing these
377 consolidations.

378 Our social media presence (Facebook and Twitter, for now) have made reference to the
379 changes and the blending, and we will be creating new pages to reflect the changing nature of
380 our identity.

381

382 IMMEDIATE TIMELINE

383 Our two Sessions have successfully completed the following:

384 **October 3, 2017** – New Life and South Sessions met to develop the ROUGH DRAFT Transition
385 Plan for Blending the Congregations.

386 **October 9 and 10** – South and New Life Sessions met (separately) to vote on the Transition Plan
387 ROUGH DRAFT and subsequently submitted it to the Presbytery Stated Clerk for comment, to
388 Trustees for its October meeting and to the Committee on Ministry for its November meeting,
389 asking both groups for their input and guidance.

390 **October 12** – Meeting of the GVP Trustees who were invited to provide feedback and
391 suggestions.

392 **November 7** – Meeting of the GVP COM who were invited to provide feedback and suggestions.

393 **November 28th** – South and New Life Sessions met contemporaneously to vote on the FINAL
394 Transition Plan, incorporating suggestions and guidance from Stated Clerk, New Life’s attorney,
395 Trustees and COM as they felt inspired to do by the Holy Spirit. (COM liaison was present at
396 these meetings.)

397 The Plan has been unanimously approved by both Sessions for recommendation to their
398 respective congregations. Congregational meetings have been called for both congregations on
399 **December 3rd** to vote on the finalized Transition Plan. The results of the votes at the respective
400 congregational meetings will be shared immediately with COM, the Trustees, the Presbytery
401 Leader and the Stated Clerk. (COM liaison will be present at these meetings.)

402 With the final approval of both the GVP Trustees and COM at their **January meetings**, and if the
403 way be clear, we hope they will present the final Transition Plan for Blending South & New Life
404 Churches to the Presbytery membership for a vote at the January meeting of the Presbytery.

405 If the way be clear for a dissolution date of not later than February 28th, 2018, a Special
406 Meeting of the Congregation will occur on February 4 as outlined in the GOVERNMENT section
407 above. This will be followed, in turn, with the first combined Annual Meeting on February 25,
408 2018 in the lodge of the Brighton Town Park. Actions to be taken at this combined meeting will
409 follow the outline for election of officers as described above in the GOVERNMENT section of this
410 document.

411 God’s Plan is still unfolding.

412 If there’s one thing that South has learned over the last five years, and that New Life is now
413 learning: Change is the only constant.

414 We all understand and appreciate that creating new ways of doing things – let alone new ways
415 of *thinking* about things – can be cumbersome and sometimes a little scary. But we also have
416 learned through our respective processes of moving outside of our comfortable buildings that
417 God’s guidance and the presence of the Holy Spirit are real things. When faced with stepping
418 off a cliff, one of two things will happen ... we’ll either land on solid ground or we’ll be taught
419 how to fly. The faith is in the stepping and not knowing which of those two things will happen.
420 But either way, it is a “leap of faith,” and our two congregations are happy and excited to be
421 holding hands, growing in our faith as we head toward the step-off together.

422 To God be the Glory.

423

424

425 | ATTESTATION

426 This Transitional Plan for Blending South & New Life Presbyterian Churches – Fourth DRAFT /
427 FINAL version (revised November 28, 2017) – was approved and independently adopted by the
428 respective Sessions of South Presbyterian Church and New Life Presbyterian Church, at called
429 special meetings, as affirmed below by the signatures of their Clerks:

430

431

432 South Presbyterian Church on ___/___/2017 _____
433 Amy Parker Doty, *Clerk of Session*

434

435 New Life Presbyterian Church on ___/___/2017 _____
436 Barbara Durfee, *Clerk of Session – Pro Tem*

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