

# NEW PSALMIST BAPTIST CHURCH

## SEVEN-YEAR PLAN

Submitted in connection with the

### Windsor Castle Celebration of Plans for Generational Change for a Living Planet

#### Introduction

The New Psalmist Baptist Church (“NPBC”) is a 110-year old, predominately African-American congregation in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. On behalf of our seven thousand five hundred (7,500+) member church family, and the networks of which New Psalmist is a part, we are pleased to submit this Seven-Year Plan, and honored to participate in the historic Windsor Castle Celebration. It is our expectation that this Plan will be a living, ever expanding documentation of ideas, actions, and results. It represents our commitment to care for God’s magnificent creation.

#### Background

For approximately the last third of its life as a church, NPBC has undertaken to *empower disciples*. That is, NPBC has sought to help guide each individual touched by its ministries to a deeper understanding of God’s individual calling in his or her life, and, moreover, to help each one chart a course to that calling. More recently, NPBC has expanded its understanding of that mission to encompass greater care for our physical environment. The revelation was that empowerment of disciples could be undermined significantly by the degradation of the physical environment, and the challenges that such degradation presented to our daily lives. Thus, our commission to spread the gospel had to be animated by works that sought to: build individual and institutional capacity, ensure safeguards for human dignity, give a voice for empowerment to the disenfranchised, alleviate poverty, and maintain good stewardship of God’s resources. It is against this backdrop that NPBC has initiated its work towards protection of the environment and conservation of natural resources, and in this context that we have prepared this New Psalmist Baptist Church Seven-Year Plan (the “Plan”).

This Plan attempts to set NPBC's activities to date, and NPBC's future plans within that Alliance of Religions and Conservation ("ARC") 7-Year Plan framework. This Plan builds on past and current activities, such as NPBC's participation in clean water and medicine delivery projects in Kenya, our partnership with Kenyan church congregations and our participation in United Nations Environment Program ("UNEP") policy discussions. In addition, the Plan speaks in general terms to a future that NPBC envisions. Ultimately, the Plan represents our understanding of new experiences and revelations of how God is calling us to live out our charge. Accordingly, this Plan will change over time, reflecting the growth of our understanding of these revelations.

## **NPBC Seven-Year Plan**

The following Plan is organized around the seven (7) elements of the ARC framework. Each section articulates a broad "commitment," that summarizes NPBC's approach in that area. This Plan reflects our awakening, our commitment to a brighter future, and a healthy sense of urgency, given the current geopolitical, cultural, and economic circumstances. In areas where our planning or activity is more developed, we have included more specific goals and activities. However, in areas where our activity is more nascent, the Plan offers less detail. For example, while elements of this current Plan with respect to lifestyles, partnerships, education and young people and celebration are more developed, we expect to expand other Plan elements as future components.

### **1. Faith-Consistent Use of Assets**

New Psalmist Baptist Church is preparing our congregation and its networks to manage all of its collective and individual resources in a modern world. As our communities develop, understanding the environment and the management of natural resources has become very important to us. We believe the investments we make to expand awareness and deepen understanding will contribute to the health of our world and the lives therein. Our members are exposed to actions they can take as individuals and with their families; in addition to consequences

of decisions taken at the state, national and international governing levels.

The current contexts in which environmental issues are being considered provides for great opportunities. There are legislative tools invoked to create employment. Many captains of industry are required to reconsider how and where they conduct business. We see the advent of new industry sectors of which we intend to be a part.

**Goal 1:** A fully informed church congregation, and network member churches who are aware of the impact of mismanagement of environmental resources and who are empowered to mobilize to advocate for improved management of natural resources.

**Goal 2:** A congregation and network member churches connected to policy discussions and resource allocation discussions to advocate on behalf of disadvantaged communities.

**Goal 3:** Educated individuals, church congregations and networks empowered to make behavioral changes to minimize individual and aggregate environmental impacts.

**Activities:**

Financial empowerment workshops to maximize financial potential and spiritual wealth.

Business entrepreneurs institute to aid in making faith consistent investments

Development of options to make our new, 41 million dollar edifice more energy efficient, including review of lighting, heating, materials and energy efficiency strategies.

Conduct of energy audits in the homes of individual parishioners in conjunction with the local energy supplier in Maryland

**2. Education and Young People**

Several of NPBC's ministries are dedicated to the development of young people. In particular, we are focusing our efforts on building a strong, positive cadre of young people who 1) excel in the fields of science and technology, 2) recognize the global nature of the positive and negative

uses of natural resources, and 3) contribute to the well-being of society -  
- here and abroad.

**Goal 1:** Educated young people who understand the science behind the impact of man's interaction with the natural world.

**Goal 2:** Empowered "army" of young people who are able to mobilize to undertake works or to advocate positions.

**Goal 3:** A generation of servant leaders committed to living out God's call by uplifting their fellow human beings, including the most threatened and disadvantaged.

### **Activities:**

New Psalmist has sought to educate its community on maintaining healthy lifestyles, implementing highly successful health fairs, and quarterly classes and workshops to improve overall health and reduce disease.

Members of the Foreign Mission Ministry (FOM) began their educational mission work in Kenya in 2006 while training with a partnering church from the United States. Members of the team participated in projects to help combat poverty and disease which resulted from water scarcity, and water contamination. During their training, members of FOM assembled and programmed a 14 station computer laboratory in a primary school in Kenya. These types of programs will continue.

Our plan is to increase our involvement in our international schools by providing pastoral care, educational and medical services to Nairobi's Redeemed Gospel Church and the Shadrack primary school. Additionally, New Psalmist would like to bring in its corporate partners, such as Feed the Children, to assist with providing food, feminine hygiene products, and HIV support at both Shadrack and RGC schools but will require funding to sustain effort.

To combat the effects of global warming and climate change on our community, Bishop Thomas' vision was to have a community development corporation that would provide services to the community and City that would help build individual capacity. The Sankofa Community Development Corporation has partnered with the Living Classroom foundation to receive a grant from the National Science Foundation. These organizations sponsor the Voyage of Exploration Program. This program uses maritime boat building to introduce participants to environmental science, engineering, technology and mathematics concepts. The grant offer the

aforementioned concepts in after-school, Saturday school, and summer camp settings. Year one is scheduled to accommodate 360 students, with growth to 1000 students in succeeding years.

### **3. Pastoral Care**

We have inherited wisdom that promotes the value of knowing who we are in contexts that are both local and global; and, historical and current. We also see significant value in preparing to walk into our future informed and prepared to live harmoniously and well. The importance of caring for the environment, even in urban settings, continues to broaden in scope and complexity.

**Goal:** Ministries that teach and incorporate a deeper understanding of man's place and responsibility to care for God's creation.

#### **Activities:**

NPBC promotes simpler living by transforming the church into a museum during our month long celebration of the church's anniversary. Additionally, NPBC is seeking to increase its environmental ethic throughout the congregation and community. The church staff is expanding its recycling efforts, and looking at identifying various ways to reduce its carbon footprint and energy consumption. The church leadership will expand these efforts to the congregation and its network through seminars and workshops with children, youth, young adult, and adult ministries throughout the church. For example, NPBC has had energy conservation training sessions in the community over the last year and will continue this practice. We estimate that over 1,200 families have taken advantage of this training thus far, with an expected over 1000 more will participate in the future.

Primary and Secondary school age students in the church will participate in an annual Science Fair to explore and learn of new, creative ideas to preserve our living planet and celebrate God's creation. Moreover, NPBC has a host of corporate partners who will bring resources to the church to help the congregation and community implement new

practices. For example, regarding our corporate partners, we have engaged Micro Water Facility, from the Netherlands and Catholic Earthcare Australia to collaborate with NPBC and the Redeemed Gospel Church in Nairobi, Kenya to begin alternative sanitation systems in Nairobi, Kenya. This effort in conjunction with the Dutch government, we will work on pilot efforts, through 2011, in the use of these alternative systems for sanitation, including an assessment of its utility and possibilities for replication. NPBC's Financial Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, and Foreign Outreach ministries are working on this project collaboratively. Additionally, as our Entrepreneurship ministry has begun this new venture with Micro Water Facility, the ministry is exploring how to incorporate modules that develop new and existing businesses to be cleaner, greener and ecologically friendly.

#### 4. Lifestyles

New Psalmist has committed to engaging its congregations in assessing the consequences and rewards of daily choices. We support local efforts of reducing, reusing, and recycling. In addition to encouraging these positive changes in behavior, expose them to information that explains the residual impacts both locally and globally.

**Goal:** A congregation making wise choices, based upon knowledge of the use of natural resources.

**Activities:**

In just two years, the congregation has recycled 46.2 tons of paper. This activity continues, and has resulted in enough funding to assist students in a local Baltimore school, with further plans to expand into the areas of plastics and other recyclable material.

Our Evangelism ministry has discovered way to creatively spread the gospel and preserve the environment. Their *Recycle the Blessing* campaign is a program where we ask the church community be a blessing to someone who may not know God by donating their old, used CD's and DVD's to the Evangelism Ministry. As the Ministry performs outreach in the communities, they give persons CD's and DVD's. This outreach methodology reduces paper production of tracts and Bibles and reduces the churches overall carbon footprint.

The Catering ministry and adult students from our Life Empowerment classes explored creating gardens on the campus of the

church this year. The ministries grew bell and banana peppers, cherry and tomatoes, zucchini, as well as a number of herbs, including dill, cilantro, tarragon, and parsley. Members of these ministries are seeking to create a larger garden at the new edifice. Additionally, these ministries are planning to teach members of the church and community the advantages to growing their own food as a means of returning to a simpler lifestyle and becoming more self sufficient. NPBC's new edifice will showcase a café that will provide services to families throughout the community. It is our intent to provide a wide range of products that are made with organic and free range products.

## **5. Media and Advocacy**

New Psalmist Baptist Church has strong links with media and advocacy groups. It has also established strong ties to government and non government entities to enhance the ability of the church and its networks to be a voice and advocating on behalf of the interests of our obligations as good stewards of God's creation.

Goal: Continuous interaction with all forms of media outlets for advice, feedback, input and action beneficial to the environmental protection and conservation of natural resources.

### **Activities:**

New Psalmist plays a pivotal role in contributing to the shaping of global environmental policy. It shares these policy issues within the New Psalmist family and its networks, as well as with local, state and national elected officials. The various means of media that exist at New Psalmist to educate persons on environment issues are:

- Quarterly Magazine – *Empowering Disciples*
- Empower Disciple 24-Hour Network and Live Internet Broadcast
- New Psalmist Website
- Church Bulletin
- Radio Broadcast
- Local and National Television broadcast

## 6. Partnerships

New Psalmist believes that our ability to successfully establish a strong environmental ethic lies in partnerships with others. We strive to energize our stakeholders (both local and global) and all those with whom we can advance the goals of a sustainable cleaner, safer environment.

**Goal 1:** Enhanced participation in UNEP and other forums, continuing to influence policy discussion consistent with NPBC values.

**Goal 2:** Regular convening of disparate groups, including those who are traditionally under-represented, or unrepresented, to discuss environmental issues and resource management.

### **Activities:**

We seek to expand our efforts to utilize partnerships to achieve the following goals:

- Partnerships to feed hungry children locally, nationally, and internationally
- Partnerships to support mission workers traveling to foreign countries
- Expand youth opportunities to learn more about the environment
- Further develop more green jobs in the workplace

Teach families how to conserve energy and reduce carbon footprint

## 7. Celebration

New Psalmist has mounted many successful outreach celebrations locally, nationally and even internationally. Our increased awareness of the current state of the environment has found its way into the traditional religious fabric as themes are woven for planned events of celebration.

### **Activities:**

New Psalmist has worked with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation over the past several years, and as a culminating present to the Alliance and other conservation officials, will present an original

musical composition titled "That's What the Cross Would Say", as an offering in recognition of Creation. The composition is drawn from a 7<sup>th</sup> century poem called The Dream of the Rood and will be released in the United States on October 18, and in the United Kingdom on November 3.

During the third week in October, New Psalmist will launch Science Week, which is designed to inspire young people to care about the earth's resources. There will be "teach-ins", science competitions, prizes, and special education opportunities for many grade-levels. In addition to young people, many adults will participate as instructors, workshop leaders, and contributors.

New Psalmist has held theatrical productions, Holiday-related concerts (Easter, Christmas, etc), and other festivals, but it has never initiated a concert based upon Creation. This fall, we will inaugurate our first Creation Celebration. This Celebration concert will honor the magnificence of creation, and every composition will have an environmental theme. This will become an annual event, supplemented by other ongoing festivals and concerts in ensuing years