

MDP Narrative Question 2:

Question 2: What is the nature and context of the Newark community in which Park Presbyterian Church's congregation lives out its mission/vision? How will PPC address the emerging needs that are impacting your community?

Background on the Village of Newark

The Village of Newark exists between Rochester and Syracuse, NY alongside the Erie Canal. At its peak, Newark had an estimated population of 12,868. The village 2020 Census statistics indicated a median age of 42.8 with 42% of the population aged 50 and above. The median income for the Village is under \$45,000, and the poverty rate, as of 2019 was 14.7%. In 2021, the population was 7% Hispanic/Latino, 7% Black, and 81% White (the remaining percentage was comprised of mixed-race individuals). As of 2022, 10.4% of high school graduates and 27.2% of non-high school graduates live in poverty. The poverty rate was 21.0% among disabled residents, which is somewhat inflated due to the state institution for the mentally challenged being based in Newark.

As is the case for many upstate New York communities, Newark was originally an agricultural community. Over time, the Newark community evolved to include many prosperous businesses such as *The Courier-Gazette*, Jackson and Perkins Rose Gardens and Sarah Coventry Jewelry, as well as a state-run organization for the mentally challenged, all of which supported a very active community. Over time, many of Newark's leading businesses either closed or moved their operations out of state. With their departure, the Village of Newark lost 30 percent of the population between 1960 and 2020.

Newark is estimated to have under 9,000 residents within the village. Currently, Newark's *offers services such as* Rochester Regional Hospital, Newark Central School district, *ARC*, and a strong, and active

public library. Residents can *also* utilize the Regional Transportation bus system. Newark also has several businesses which employ hundreds of local citizens, including IEC Electronics Corporation (a Boston based company with 550 employees in Newark), *one of the original Wegman's stores*, Marshalls Exteriors, *Lagana Plumbing, Plassche Lumber*, Secor Lumber, Brownstone Physical Therapy, and Halligans. Additionally, Colacino Industries is currently expanding their facility, and some recent new businesses include a reopening of a drive-in theater, eBike315 and Honest Pharma, home of New York's Largest Grow Warehouse & Hydroponics Store serving Upstate, Central, & Western New York, *and new construction just began on a new Taco Bell and a Microtel Hotel*. As part of a 10-million dollar Downtown Revitalization grant from the state, Newark has plans for a new fitness center, and converting an old manufacturing building into senior housing with 95 apartments. The grant also includes plans *for Canal Port, which will include revitalization of the Newark section of Erie Canal with a new kayak and canoe launch, an amphitheater, and new canal-side housing and entertainment attraction*.

Background on Park Presbyterian Church

Park Presbyterian Church (PPC) was formed in 1825 with sixty-three charter members when three different religious organizations came together. At its peak in 1961, the congregation was comprised of almost 1,000 members, and over 750 attended service on a regular basis.

At one time in its history, Newark was the home to 17 religious organizations. Currently, Newark has 5 or 6 active churches, most of which are experiencing declining membership. Park Presbyterian Church currently has 96 members, and, on average, has 40-45 who attend services regularly. Happily, we recently confirmed 5 new members to our congregation, including one adult baptism!

Park Church's Mission Activities

PPC has continuously contributed to the Presbytery's mission activities. Through-out PPC's history, our congregation has participated in various

mission activities such as work camps, the Heifer Project, and Living Waters. Park was also instrumental in establishing a cooperative nursery school in Park Church's building, which ran for nearly 30 years. PPC also purchased a building for senior living called Park Place, and it also ran for many years.

Our current interim pastor has been instrumental in helping the church to identify new organizations such as Survivors Advocacy, which have benefited from the mission support of Park Church and its congregation. Current activities include Survivor Advocacy (domestic abuse program), Canandaigua Call to Care (a refugee resettlement program), Laurel House (hospice housing), Common Treads (clothing for young children) and ABCD (a migrant educational program). Additionally, PPC offers the church building to numerous community groups such as AA, NA, Babies, etc. Gem Club, Daughters of the American Revolution, Latin Flavor, Newark Garden Club, Trail Works, Inc. and the Boy Scouts.

Since the inception of TIC (Together in Christ), PPC has been an active member. TIC is comprised of members from the various local churches, who work together to address current concerns and plan joint events. Jointly, the churches support a local Food Closet through weekly food donations and special events collection. Additionally, Park Church has also written several grants for the Food Closet successfully soliciting funding from the Geneva Presbytery.

In October 2018, PPC was instrumental in the formation of a local chapter of Family Promise, a national non-profit organization addressing homelessness and job readiness. Initially, local churches housed and fed the homeless families in the Family Promise program. During the pandemic, Family Promise changed its model to renting housing for its program participants, and PPC continues to provide meals, as well as financial donations. Moreover, Park Church and Park Church's Women's group have pledged funds to Family Promise for the possible purchase of a rental building.

To summarize, PPC's mission activities tend to be more locally focused. This is in large part due to the aging of the congregation. With a declining number of congregants, we are striving to continue PPC's strong history of mission work in ways that are feasible for *today's* congregation, while **still** contributing to the church's mission within the Newark community.