

Mission Study Report

A Vision for the Future of Our Church

Mission Study Report and Invitation to “Sea Country”

“The sea that he made belongs to him, along with the dry land that his hands formed. Come! Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel in the presence of the Lord, who made us.”

Psalm 95:5-6

Purpose of the Mission Study

This report provides a comprehensive overview of Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church (“LNPC”) past and present, its place in the community and the characteristics we seek in a new Pastor.

We are a stable, mature congregation located in a desirable beach-adjacent community fondly nicknamed “Sea Country”. In large part due to the strong leadership and vision of our current Pastor, LNPC has done the hard work of developing its core values; we know who we are. We believe we are best at Loving, Connecting, Transforming and Serving.

With that as an essential foundation, we are committed to becoming a more relevant and engaged presence in our community. We seek a new head of staff who is dynamic and ecumenically-steeped, is orderly but not overly bureaucratic, who shares our vision and our passion and who will roll up sleeves and lay down roots in our community. We prepared this Mission Study Report as a tool in aid of that search.

Statements of Purpose

Mission Statement

The mission of Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church is the same mission Jesus gave his followers: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Vision Statement

The vision of Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church is create a community of authentic believers and to witness a city transformed by the life changing reality of the gospel, as people come to know Jesus as their lord and savior.

LNPC snapshot (past and present)

Foundation

Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church (LNPC) has a rich history tied to the development of the coastal Orange County community of Laguna Niguel. We began as a small fellowship founded by 5 families in 1986 and grew alongside the City which was founded in 1989. Worship services were held in modular units until the new sanctuary was completed in 1995. The first formal worship was held that same year.

Over the years, LNPC has been a center of community life (literally located across from the Civil Center complex), known for its strong music program, thought-provoking sermons, and commitment to local service. We have been a pillar of faith for generations, with a deep-rooted, older membership. While this legacy is a source of strength, we also acknowledge that our demographic profile like the broader community is aging. Our older membership, while deeply committed, has seen a gradual decline in recent decades, and we face the challenge of attracting new members to ensure our long-term vitality.

Currently, staff is comprised of Senior Pastor and Head of Staff Jim Szeyller, Office Manager Stephanie Muck, Director of Technology and Youth Director Ben Roebuck and Director of Music Ministries Lee Lee Truong-Sawicki.

LNPC Campus

Our campus comprises 2 main buildings, the Sanctuary and McCullen Center. Capacity in the sanctuary is 550 people and includes a nursery, bride's room/quiet room, state-of-the-art AV and sound rooms and a choir room. In 2005, the McCullen Center was dedicated as an addition to the LNPC campus. Our 19,000 square foot, 2-story building includes a large hall, room capacity of 700 people, a full-service kitchen, classrooms, administrative offices, meeting rooms and a "garage" where the youth of LNPC meet. There is no debt service on these facilities, they are fully owned. The grounds of the LNPC campus are generously landscaped and

include mature trees, a children's play area, a rose garden, and raised-bed vegetable gardens. The parking lot is the property of a neighboring office building; LNPC holds an easement to use the parking lot for church activities, while the owner is responsible for maintenance.

Pastoral Leadership

Reverend Dr. H. Kenneth McCullen accepted the call to serve as Pastor of LNPC in 1986. Reverend Dr. Donald Gard was a Parish Associate from 1988 to 1995. Reverend Duncan McColl was called to serve as the Interim Associate Pastor in 1999. Dr. McCullen retired in 2000.

Dr. Richard Wiggers was called to serve as the Interim Pastor from 2000 to 2002. Reverend Dr. Randy Steele was called to serve as Pastor in 2002. In 2008, Reverend Duncan McColl left LNPC to go to the First Presbyterian Church of Fullerton. At the same time, his wife Reverend Emily McColl was installed as Interim Associate Pastor. After having served 13 years, Dr. Steele announced his retirement.

Reverend Emily McColl then served as first responder Pastor between February and July 2014. Reverend Paul Reeves was called to be Interim Pastor July 2014 until 2015, when our current Pastor Jim Szeyller and his wife Becky found their home with us. The Szeyllers committed to 10 years with us and graciously and honorably fulfilled their commitment.

Worship Services

Our main worship service is on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. and follows a traditional Presbyterian format. The service is characterized by a strong emphasis on liturgy, hymns, and a robust sermon. Music is a central part of our worship, led by a talented organist and choir. We also offer a live stream of the service, which became a vital tool during the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to serve our homebound and remote members. We recognize that while the live stream is a valuable ministry, it has also contributed to a decline in in-person attendance, and we are actively seeking ways to encourage physical gathering and connection.

Attendance is as follows:

2025 Seasonal Worship Averages

January – Lent (Jan 5 – Mar 2)

	Total	Weekly Average
Livestream	1718	191
In Person	852	95
Journey	89	10
Total in Worship		2659

Lent – Easter (Mar 9 – April 20)

	Total	Weekly Average
Livestream	1315	188
In Person	821	103
Journey	68	10
Total in Worship		2207*

Easter to Pentecost (April 27 – June 8)

	Total	Weekly Average
Livestream	1294	195
In Person	703	100
Journey	70	10
Total in Worship		2067

Summer - Fall YTD (June 15 – Aug 31)

	Total	Weekly Average
Livestream	2342	195
In Person	1238	103
Journey	87	9
Total in Worship		2067

Fall through Advent (September 14 – November 23)
 Advent through Christmas (November 30 – December 24)
 Christmastide (December 28)

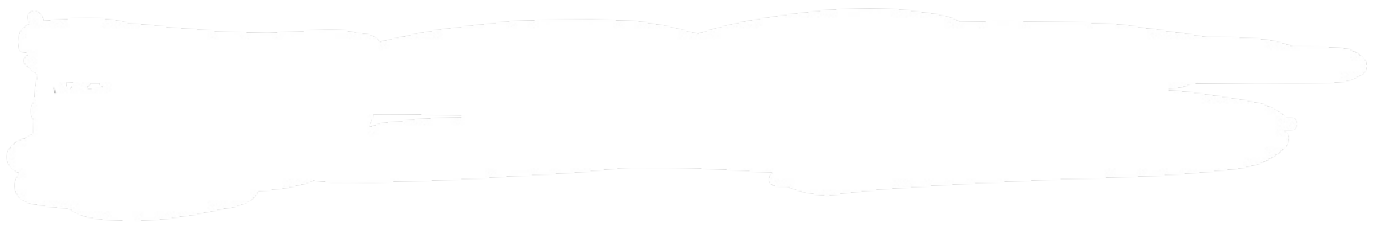
*Includes Easter Sunrise which is not computed in weekly average

Data Analytics

Kingdom Analytics was engaged to provide a demographic and psychographic survey of LNPC as a church and the surrounding community within a 20 minute drive from the campus.

Analysis of the congregation

Rolls were culled in mid-2024 and we currently have 177 members across 105 families at LNPC. Membership has declined over the years, and this is a definite challenge we face. Ages 51-65 years makes up our largest percentage, 28.5%. According to Kingdom Analytics, our congregation breaks down along the line of 3 major mosaics: (1) Philanthropic Sophisticates, (2) American Royalty and (3) Golf Carts and Gourmets. Mosaics are a demographic segmentation system. They seek to provide a multi-dimensional view of a community taking into account multiple socio-economic and life-stage factors.



Briefly the mosaics in our congregation are defined or described as follows:

Philanthropic Sophisticates

70.48% or 74 Households

- ☑ Mature and Upscale: We are primarily composed of older, retired couples and singles living in suburban comfort near major cities.
- ☑ Educated and Experienced: Many of us hold advanced degrees and have had successful careers in business, science, law, or education.
- ☑ Philanthropic Leaders: We are deeply committed to philanthropy, regularly contributing to charities focused on health, education, politics, the environment, and the arts.
- ☑ Denominationally Loyal: We have a strong loyalty to our church denomination and are significant supporters of faith-based nonprofits and community services.
- ☑ Culturally Engaged: We value high-quality worship and educational opportunities in our spiritual communities, often integrating arts and lifelong learning into our spiritual practice.
- ☑ Global Perspective: While our roots are local, we embrace a global outlook, supporting outreach and mission projects that have regional and international impact.
- ☑ Comfort and Quality in Worship: Our preference is for well-resourced churches that can provide enriching and dignified worship experiences, reflecting our values of history, tradition, and community service.

☑ Community and Leadership Involvement: We actively participate in church leadership, often serving on boards and committees, and are instrumental in mentoring the next generation, reflecting our commitment to fostering a robust and enduring community.

American Royalty

11.43% or 12 Households

- ☑ Wealthy, influential and successful couples and families living in prestigious suburbs. Global perspective, leadership, drive for affluence and sense of well-being.
- ☑ People in this segment regard church membership as a status, and often choose churches like they choose cars. “My church should catch people’s attention.”
- ☑ People in this segment generally prefer a larger church (but not necessarily a mega-church). They may be sporadic in church attendance, and may gladly connect with a church via web casts.
- ☑ People in this segment can be extraordinarily generous givers, but only if the church has a proven record of excellent stewardship with minimum waste.

Golf Carts and Gourmets

6.67% or 7 Households

- ☑ Upscale retirees and empty-nesters in comfortable communities.
- ☑ Quiet good taste, morality with minimum sacrifice, global perspective, planned lifestyles, high commitment to career, high sense of well-being.
- ☑ The mix of retirees over 65 and empty-nesting couples are often quite knowledgeable of denominational history and polity. People in this lifestyle segment share and receive information via printed newsletters (newspapers, magazines, and books), and through the telephone. Some will use mobile phones, most rely on traditional telephones. The internet is foreign to most of these people. They probably do not use email or participate in social networks.
- ☑ People in this lifestyle consider faith to be very important and regularly attend church. Religion provides continuity with the past, which is particularly important because many are in transition to homes in warmer climates (Florida and the southwest).
- ☑ Social and Leisure Activities: This group enjoys a blend of leisure and social activities. They are drawn to churches that offer a strong sense of community with social events, gatherings, and opportunities to engage with others in relaxed, upscale settings like dinner parties or charity golf events.
- ☑ Family-Oriented Programs: Churches with a focus on multigenerational programs that engage not only adults but also children and grandchildren are appealing. This

group values family involvement in church life, from youth programs to family-friendly worship services.

☑ **High-Quality Worship and Aesthetics:** They appreciate churches that offer high-quality, well-organized worship services with engaging sermons and a focus on tradition mixed with modern relevance. A well-maintained, aesthetically pleasing church environment is important.

☑ **Charity and Community Impact:** This group appreciates opportunities to contribute to social causes. They are attracted to churches with active charitable programs that give back to the community in meaningful, visible ways.

Analysis of community demographics over a 5 to 10 year period

Laguna Niguel is a highly affluent community with a median household income significantly higher than the national average. The cost of living is high, with a median home price over \$1 million and high monthly rent. While the community is expected to grow through 2035 and roughly 4 new people move into the community every day, younger families are moving out due to the high cost of living. The area is 57% more expensive than the national average and income is 9% higher than the national average (median \$80,610 nationally vs. \$87,499 locally; \$131,363 average income in our community). This leads to annual cost-of-living deficit for the area of \$39,059. Our congregation's average income is \$144,952.

Like our church, the community of Laguna Niguel is aging. The median age in Laguna Niguel is around 47.7 years, which is older than the state average, but there is a mix of young professionals, families and retirees. The community is also ethnically diverse, though our church's demographic profile is predominantly White. Our residents are highly educated, with a large percentage holding bachelor's and graduate degrees. While our community is affluent, it also has a significant number of people who are seeking a sense of fellowship, purpose and spiritual connection. Our beloved Senior Pastor leaves us in a strong position; we believe with the right leadership we are uniquely positioned to meet that need.

Analysis of Finances

LNPC's annual budget for the last 5 years has ranged between a low of \$709,393 and a high of \$759,391 and remains relatively steady. Variance between actual to budget has ranged between a negative (\$21,179) to a positive \$31,066. Approximately ½ of the congregation actively pledges. Staff salaries have received only modest increases over the past several years with the Senior Pastor and Head of Staff selflessly foregoing raises for several years so that budget numbers could be met.

Analysis of Outreach and Ministries

Our current outreach efforts are focused on providing financial and volunteer support to local non-profits and running a food pantry. Mission Projects that LNPC is involved in or given money to include: (1) South County Outreach Hunger & Homelessness, (2) Military Support, (3) Friendship Shelter, (4) Presbyterian Mission Agency, (5) Family Assistance Ministries, (6) Disaster Assistance Outreach and (7) Plant with Purpose.

Our ministries are currently designed to serve our existing, older membership. These ministries and examples of their programs and features include:

- ✝ Deacon's Ministry (Grief Share, Red Cross drive, Holy Yoga, memorials and caring for one another through visits, calls, and support during times of need)
- ✝ Communications and Production Ministry (Sea Country Festival, website/Facebook/Instagram, livestream, and Laguna Niguel Chamber of Commerce)
- ✝ Worship & Music (Christmas Worship Festival, Performing Arts Series, The Journey and Sunday Worship service)
- ✝ Congregational Life Ministry (Christmas Caroling, providing food and drinks for outreaches and Sunday service)
- ✝ Men's Ministry (Service projects, Bible study and organized outings off campus)
- ✝ Women's Ministry (Service projects, Bible study and organized outings offsite) *
- ✝ Youth Ministry (Service projects and mission trips)
- ✝ Children's Ministry (Vacation Bible Camp and Operation Christmas Child) *
- ✝ Stewardship and Planned Giving (Spirit of Aloha fundraiser)
- ✝ Buildings and Grounds (Physical plant and 3rd party hosting such as AA meetings)
- ✝ Finance (Budgeting, bill pay and risk management)
- ✝ Personnel (Staffing, policies and procedures, hiring)
- ✝ Safety and Security (Safe grounds)

*Currently helmed by Becky Szeyller who immediately and graciously stepped in and stepped up when we needed her.

While these are vital services, we recognize the need to move beyond simply providing resources to actively engaging with our neighbors. Many people in Laguna

Niguel may not be aware of our church or its mission. We need a Pastor who can help us identify new ways to connect with our community and to be a more visible and relevant presence. This includes leveraging our physical space for community events, fostering partnerships with local organizations, and creating new ministries that address the unique needs of our community, such as support for families navigating the high cost of living or programs for young professionals, a single ministry or a counseling ministry. Moreover, some of the programming is scheduled during the day when working members are not available. There is a clear opportunity to develop new ministries that are relevant to the broader Laguna Niguel community and that appeal not just to the community as a whole but especially to younger families and individuals.

Compliments, Criticisms and Challenges

In order to get at the heart of how we feel about our church, our community and our future, the Mission Study team conducted a written survey and 3 focus groups. Surveys were sent by mail and solicited online from 105 member households. 50 were completed and returned. The surveys requested short answers to the following prompts:

1. What does LNPC do well?
2. What could LNPC do better?
3. How do you believe the community perceives LNPC?
4. Use 3 words or phrases to describe LNPC worship services.
5. Let us know what ministries or missions you participate in or have participated in. (7 mission projects and 15 ministry teams were offered as choices.)
6. If LNPC were blessed with an abundance of funding, how would you like to see the money used?

Because the prompts allowed for free-form short answers, and many responses were thoughtful and extended, the results of the survey have been summarized below by scanning for key words and phrases repeated across a number of surveys. This analysis presents those key responses that occurred most often across multiple surveys. They are divided among the categories of LNPC worship, fellowship, ministries, missions, and needs addressed. For each of these categories, the key responses expressed by the largest plurality of surveys, and any responses expressed by a significant minority of surveys, are reported.

Sermons

A great plurality of responses (17) praised the relevance, topicality, guidance, uplift, and relatability of Pastor Jim Szeyller's sermons. No dissenting views were expressed. We know this has been a strength of LNPC since it was founded. Our Pastors have been gifted with the art of hearing the Holy Spirit and translating its message into topical and uplifting sermons. Our current Pastor is uniquely gifted with the art of storytelling, mixing inspirational and thought-provoking messages with real world examples and challenges.

Music

Music can be the source of strong disagreements in any church, and LNPC is no exception. A plurality of responses (11) praised the excellence and inspirational qualities of the worship music presented by Music Minister Lee Lee Truong-Sawicki. Each worship service includes contemporary praise music, hymn singing, and choral or solo anthem and offertory. A significant minority (4 responses) held that the music was dated and holds the church back, as tastes have changed in favor of professionally performed contemporary worship music. Opinions were divided as to the Chancel Choir, with 3 holding that the choir does well, and an equal number holding that the choir is not good, or that choral hymns and anthems should be reserved for special occasions.

Worship

A plurality of responses (8) described the worship experience at LNPC with adjectives like "comforting", "educational", "uplifting", and "joyful". Another 7 responses described worship as "warm", "spirited", and "traditional", and another 7 described worship as "grounded in the Bible". Responses that believed worship could be done better described the experience as "like grandparents", "uninspiring", or "dated" (4) and 3 expressed the need for new ideas and thinking "outside the box". Input from the focus groups suggested that the congregation would like to seem more lay involvement in making announcements at the beginning of service and doing the liturgical readings.

Fellowship

The largest plurality of responses in the survey (18) praised times of fellowship as welcoming and inclusive, possessing a camaraderie that creates a feeling of family. Another 7 responses mentioned the propensity of members to reach out to others.

But another large plurality (12) bemoaned a lack of intentional outreach to visitors and potential new members, especially families. While is somewhat ironic given that one of our core values is “loving”, the issue is that we are very warm and congenial amongst friend groups or “holy huddles”. When it comes to fellowship with newcomers, however, we fall short. This is admittedly a natural tendency of any long-established group; it is one in which we as individuals, groups, and a congregation need to be taught to reach out intentionally.

Ministries

A plurality (6) of responses believed that more needed to be done with youth and children’s ministry, as an outreach to students, young adults, and families. 3 responses indicated that the ministries of LNPC do a lot more than the size of the church would indicate, but that as a result too much is asked of too few participants. 3 responses hold that Building and Grounds is doing very well at keeping the campus beautiful and inviting.

Mission

The most often mentioned mission program was Family Assistance Ministries (FAM) (5 responses). LNPC operates a FAM Satellite Distribution Center that furnishes food and other assistance to an average of 60 families a week that are homeless or in danger of food insecurity or homelessness. Vacation Bible Camp was also mentioned (2). Another 2 surveys indicated that broader participation and involvement would be desirable.

Community Perception

A significant plurality of responses characterized the church as “distant”, “uninvolved” or “irrelevant” to the community (8 responses); “old-line”, “stodgy”, “pretentious”, “closed off” or “a retirement center” (7 responses). Another plurality (7 responses) believed that advertising, publicity, and signage could be improved, and 5 favored finding more ways to reach out to the community. 4 responses each held the church to be a “vital part” of the community, a “small though caring” church, or a church “known for good works”.

Added Funding

A strong plurality (15 responses) advised committing additional funding to campus maintenance and reserves for replacement. The second-greatest plurality (8

responses) would allocate additional funding to missions, especially to the homeless. Other strong pluralities would add an associate Pastor, especially one who would work with the Church's youth (7 responses), add or raise staff and salaries (7), and provide additional support for the senior Pastor (5).

Current and Past Participation in Ministries and Missions

Preliminary results show that the median number of missions and ministries participated in is 3 (that is, half the members responding participate in at least 3 mission programs or ministry teams), that the range is 0 to 15, and the mode is 0 (that is, a plurality of members have not participated in any ministries or missions). These values are the same whether current participation or past participation is counted. This suggests that there has been, and still is, sufficient active participation of members in ministry and mission (at least half report some involvement), that there is scope to recruit members into ministry and mission programs (some members have never participated), and that there is a need to unburden the most active participants in ministry and mission (the members, and it's not just one, who participate in as many as 10 to 15).

Ideal Pastoral Candidate

LNPC is a stable, mature congregation with a big heart and unlimited possibility. We are seeking a visionary and empathetic Pastor who can lead us into the next chapter of our ministry as well as help us more deeply live and serve out our values of [Loving, Connecting, Transforming and Serving](#). The current transition date is December 31, 2026 and our new Pastor will take the reins approximately two weeks into 2027; there is no interim to replace. The ideal candidate will possess the following traits:

A strong communicator and preacher. We value excellent, theologically sound, and relevant preaching that connects with both our older, traditional members and the unchurched in our community. We need a Pastor who can make the Christian message balanced, accessible and compelling to a highly educated and discerning congregation. Key concepts are "flexibility" and "open-mindedness" in the worship service and beyond. We need a pastor who provokes thought and challenges us to a deeper understanding of scripture and the core tenets of the Presbyterian faith, who is both generally reverent and situationally progressive.

A bridge-builder. The new Pastor must be able to honor our history and traditions while building new relationships and attracting younger families and individuals. This

includes empowering existing members to lead new initiatives and welcoming new people into our fellowship. Opportunities to reach out to apartment dwellers and senior communities around us abound. A renewed look at which ministries are working and which ministries should be abandoned or created will require a leader with the ability to navigate strong personalities in this work. This skill will also be demonstrated by attending and participating in community events to maximize visibility. Moreover, opportunities exist for opening up the LNPC campus to host community events to draw attention to our existence.

A fiscal entrepreneur. Thoughtful stewardship of internal church finances as well as external opportunities for fundraising and growth should be priorities of a new Pastor. Candidly, it is expensive to live in Laguna Niguel. The ability to understand and manage church resources are valued characteristics.

A technological literate. We must think of new and successful ways to advertise ourselves to the community using the latest advances in AI and other forms of media. Our key demographic—Philanthropic Sophisticates—identifies LinkedIn as a the most significant form of communication. Such outreach does not have to be base, crass or solely commercial, but it should be effective.

A missional leader. We need a Pastor who will be a catalyst for change, helping us re-imagine our role in Laguna Niguel. This person should be able to inspire and mobilize the congregation to develop new ministries and outreach initiatives that serve the needs of our high-cost-of-living community.

A compassionate shepherd. Pastoral care is a core value for our congregation. We need a Pastor who will be present with us in times of joy and sorrow, and who can help us care for one another and our neighbors. The ideal candidate will be a warm, approachable, and authentic presence in our community.

Final Thoughts

LNPC is on the precipice of a spiritual revival. We can feel it in our bones, and we are ready. We need to double-down in our mission work, maintain financial solvency, reach more people and project the vibrance, vitality and spirit that are gifts from our Holy Father throughout our community. It has been a steady and joyous 10 years with Pastor Jim Szeyller and his beautiful wife Becky. He leaves us well-positioned for his successor to lead us into the next chapter with its challenges and opportunities alike. We look forward to seeing you in Sea Country at LNPC!

“I was there when he established the heavens, when he laid out the horizon on the surface of the ocean.”

Proverbs 8:27

Blessings, your Mission Study Team

Carol Stocksdales, Chris Green, Carolyn Knutson and Shannon Jenkins