



NEW SONG CHURCH

## **This Is Us – Our Creation Story**

*"He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him." (Psalm 40:9, NIV)*

In 1995, under the leadership of Pastor Jim Chandler, a small group of 15 people asked the leaders of the Ashland District of the United Methodist Church to grant permission to plant a new church in Mechanicsville, Virginia, with Psalm 40:9 as our guiding passage.

The "big idea" was not that there was a shortage of churches in Mechanicsville; instead, it was recognition that there were many people not being reached by existing models of ministry. A passion to *reach the unreached* is what drove the vision for New Song from day one, and this vision remains our story still today.

The Ashland District and the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church gave their blessing, and New Song held its first public worship service on September 14, 1997, in the auditorium at Lee-Davis High School. New Song continued to worship at the high school for the next five years.

In 2001, New Song purchased 20 acres of land on Colt's Neck Road. A master plan for development was created, and in September, 2002, phase-one was completed. Since then, the church has added an addition, fondly called the *Youth Box*, and the church has acquired the adjacent property now called the *Walnut Grove House*, which hosts the community's Backpack Ministry, small groups and one of our Counseling offices.

Our congregation has grown in size... from that original group that met in a Living Room some 20 years ago, to now averaging closer 350-400 on a regular basis in worship. Our children's and youth ministries have also grown into higher numbers in the last several years, even as our youth ministry is now in a transition time of increase (following many, many high school graduations!).

Growth in small groups has steadily increased over the years, especially with an emphasis to have all participants in a small group following our **New Song: 101** class.

In August of 2008, Pastor Jim went to a new church start in New Jersey, and in November of 2008 Pastor Chad Herndon arrived to serve as our new Lead Pastor. We have had a total of two Associate Pastors during these last several years, along with some 6 worship leaders since 1998.

Our current Church staff includes: Executive Director, Church Administrator, two Christian Counselors, a Youth Director and a Children's Director, an Administrative Assistant, Communication Director, Tech Director, Custodian, and several childcare workers.

## What We've Worked to Overcome

As part of a SWOT analysis (**S**trengths-**W**eaknesses-**O**pportunities-**T**hreats) from our church facility consultant, we became attuned to some of our challenges. New Song has a **trust** issue: we have made great, forward-leaning progress in this area, but we still aren't always confident in any given decision. People report they're "waiting for the other shoe to drop." Is this because we attract a large number of very "young" Christians (those new to the faith)? Perhaps. Is it because the transition from founding pastor to second pastor was a bit chaotic and frustrating: many held the belief that facts were not being transparently conveyed. It could be any number of reasons, but the final turn is that our present leaders have had to commit to working all the more intentionally to insure each turn in the process is conveyed with clarity and transparency – even to the point of "over-communicating" the needs of the day. Our commitment remains for all to have access to any part of the ministry that can be shared.

Another item is **solvency**. We have made tremendous strides in this area and large credit goes to our Financial Management Team, Stewardship efforts (an annual campaign that reminds people to give as God leads), and to the generosity of the worshipping Body itself. There was a time (ie: 2009) when the Church's checking account reached \$2.76. Reserves had been depleted, and there was not much left for bills, let alone staff salaries or any extras. New Song has worked hard to not be in that financial situation ever again. With an original \$1.6 million in debt-servicing, we have done well to pay down this weighted burden, but it has admittedly been a slow process. The original terms on the loan included very high interest rates and as the 2008-2009 transition unfolded, there was a dramatic decrease in giving. Thankfully, New Song was able to gain traction: we have always paid our apportionments 100%, we again have reserves, we have funds in the Checking Account, and a healthy amount set aside for designated giving. Like all churches, we will always have needs in this area as God continues to call us to expand.

Our SWOT "Top 3" rounded out with **facility space**. The 80-20 rule applies to New Song that says, "You will never grow larger than 80% of your facility's capacity." We have been over-capacity for many years. Our lobby area is cramped, our restrooms are not able to handle a large crowd, our children's and youth spaces are also packed. When built in 2002, the drawings made the building look like a huge facility! But we've filled it and are creatively working on what our next steps will be. Phase II essentially doubles our current square footage. Phase III would again double the new number of square feet. The plans are there – the ability to fill both phases already exists to some extent... but the funding is not. The work of God's people gives hope for great progress through these tremendous challenges.

We are an all-contemporary worshipping community who loves to get heart, hand, mind and faith engaged as often as possible. We like to sing; we have some who lift their hands and some who won't even smile. Many of our people are your neighbors: they work, live and dream right alongside you... and those same people struggle, pray, cry out and work for a better tomorrow. We take risks, we aim to be more vulnerable, we try to be proactive, we advocate for those in our community who are hurting or living in unstable, unsustainable environments. And we are people to respect those who agree with them 100% just as we ask for that same 100% respect for those who disagree. We have found **value** in staying connected, serving others, and growing in faith, together.

## **What's Next?**

- Currently, we are in a three-year "Next Level Innovations" program started in 2018 in cooperation from our Conference to help healthy churches become even stronger and to reshape our governance structure, ministries and outreach, etc.
  - We presently sit on 21 acres and have a Master Plan to further develop Phases II and III to include larger Children's and Administrative wings, along with additional restrooms and Common/Lobby area spaces.
  - We have purchased and funded a commercial playground area and tot lot for our children's ministry; the idea of adding a weekday Preschool and/or Day Care is included in the works once construction is completed.
  - A new LED sign has been funded and installed at the corner of our property to communicate to the surrounding community about upcoming events and inspirational messages.
  - Significant progress has been made on paying down the church's debt, reducing this amount from an initial \$1.6 million to just under \$500,000. Plans are being made to launch a new campaign that will allow for construction and ongoing debt reduction.
  - Upgrades have been made to the A/V equipment in the Worship Center.
  - Plans are being made to expand the parking area.
  - New chairs and carpet have been installed bought for the Worship Center.
  - Phase III expansion includes the development of a multi-purpose room, complete with stage, gym, expanded kitchen, shower & laundry facilities, and additional room for administrative and counseling ministry space.

## **New Song's Impact**

- Mission of Hope – New Song has made annual mission trips to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and will continue to hold fundraising events (including our community 5K), which has been held now since 2016.
- Interns, Mission of Hope – New Song has been fortunate to have the opportunity to support a youth from our church serving as an intern with Mission of Hope for several years; we continue to seek ways to support such missionaries.
- Stop Hunger Now/Rise Against Hunger – Over 75, 000 meals were packed by our members along with a collection for "Well-Digging" in Haiti this past year – this was a huge event and had close to 350 volunteering to make a difference!
- The Backpack Ministry is a joint effort between many churches and volunteers to ensure that children do not go hungry over the weekend and during the summer. New Song houses a distribution center in our Walnut Grove House.
- Team Effort – our youth and adults have served in various states as part of this program: Florida, Tennessee, Georgia and beyond.
- Monroe Park Homeless Mission – New Song joins with many other churches in the area go to this downtown area to minister to the homeless, providing hot meals, clothing, health kits and a smile in partnership with Our Shepherd's Way.
- MCEF (Mechanicsville Churches Emergency Functions) – Provides a 1-stop shop approach for clothing and emergency household needs, financial assistance, plus a food bank – we provide material, financial & volunteer support.
- UMFS (United Methodist Family Services) – Items are collected such as school supplies. Members serve as tutors to some of our area's most vulnerable populations. During our Hearts and Hands Sundays, teams have gone to complete paint and landscaping projects for the facility.

- CARITAS (Congregations Around Richmond to Assure Shelter) – New Song supports this ministry by collecting food donations, lunch bag preparations, and serving warm dinners at local host churches. We also “adopt-an-apartment” for the Sober Living program and continue to assist with “Furniture Assembly” days whereby local vendors give furniture kits and allow the profits to go to CARITAS.
- Heart Havens – This ministry serves adults with special needs; we provide yard work and volunteer assistance. We have also enjoyed being a ministry site for these residents due to our each of facility entrance and bathroom amenities.
- Operation Christmas Child, part of the Samaritan Purse ministry – Each year New Song fills hundreds of shoeboxes for this ministry. Since 2015, New Song has sent volunteers directly to the Collection Centers to help pack the now-filled boxes for shipment overseas.
- UMCOR – Whether through health kits, flood buckets, layette kits, school kits, or natural disaster response, New Song supports UMCOR throughout the year and especially ahead of each year’s Annual Conference.
- FeedMore Food Bank Ministry – New Song partners with First Shiloh Baptist every other month to distribute food to the needy in our community.
- Hearts & Hands Sundays Day - Twice a year the members of New Song are given the opportunity to leave the comforts of the worship center on a Sunday and go out into the community and be the hands and feet of Christ. Members have painted fences, cleaned gutters, raked leaves, packed health kits, painted houses and most of all: “loved their neighbor.” This event routinely draws more and more people each year and has most recently begun having local business sponsors.
- Hearts and Hands Sundays Month (expanded model) – Hearts and Hands has been so well received that in November... instead of just one Sunday, New Song celebrates an entire month of being God’s hands and feet. Ministry and serving opportunities are posted to occur throughout the month, and everyone is encouraged to do at least 2 projects. This effort began in 2010 and has grown each year beyond all expectations!

God is nurturing and strengthening our laity and leadership for growth in the years to come. New Song invites its community to be a part of the growth through prayer and support. New Song continues to remember our guiding principles:

### **VISION STATEMENT**

Our hearts and hands are focused on reflecting Christ’s love by reaching out, inviting in, and serving others.

### **MISSION**

Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

### **CORE VALUES**

- People matter
- Discipleship matters
- Impact matters

We invite anyone who is ready to join in this journey – come along! Join us as we seek to reach out across the street and across the oceans: God is at work and the Spirit is on the move right here, day after day. Christ’s invitation to “come and be with God, and go and do for God” is something we strive to bring alive every single day.