

First Presbyterian
Church
Durham, NC

Interim Process

Mission Study
Committee Report

October
2014

Mission Study Committee

Sharon Hirsch, Chairperson

Dale Gaddis

Margaret Keller

Laura Kelley

Tyler Momsen-Hudson

Carl Rist

Scottie Seawell

Beth Stringfield

Gray Wilson

Interim Minister

Reverend Mark Diehl

*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)*

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A Brief History of First Presbyterian Church

Organized on New Year's Eve 1871, First Presbyterian Church has for nearly 140 years been a beacon of Christian faith and hope where "cross the crowded ways of life" in downtown Durham. Its first frame house of worship rose at the corner of Second (Roxboro) and Main Streets in 1875-76, only to be supplanted in 1890 by a larger steepled brick edifice needed to accommodate a growing congregation drawn from the residents of the burgeoning industrial city of the New South. Many of its leaders lived near the church. Guided after 1880 by full-time resident ministers, beginning with Henry T. Darnall, the congregation embraced an emphasis on spirituality combined with efforts to reform the secular environment and evangelize among both local tobacco and textile workers' families and the unchurched in foreign lands. . The church's mill missions vastly expanded Presbyterianism in Durham. Its Pearl Mill Chapel became Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church. West Durham Chapel at Erwin Mills became Blacknall Memorial, and Edgemont Chapel became Fuller Memorial. The first church-sponsored foreign mission was planted in 1895 in central Brazil, followed by another at Soonchun, Korea, and others in Africa and Cuba.

The church expanded during the pastorate of Edward Leyburn (1902-19) by virtue of the generosity of tobacco and textile magnate George Watts, in accordance with his religious life priorities: a Sunday School building (1913); the present sanctuary (1916); the present church house (1923). The enhanced physical plant became a hub of the city's religious life during the ministry of David Scanlon (1921-1938) when temperance, biological evolution and economic depression became central issues for the society and for the church. This was also a period of democratization of church government. World War II and the postwar period found the church led by Pastor Kelsey Regen (1941-1960) and church hostess Clara P. Matthis. Together they shepherded the congregation through its service on the home front and reached out to a flood of soldiers from nearby Camp Butner. Peace found democratic tides coursing through the flagship church when the Session in 1954 overtured old Granville Presbytery to endorse ordination and installation of women as elders and deacons. The challenge of racial integration led the church in 1955 to seat all who sought to worship while continuing its traditional support for Presbyterianism in the city's African-American community primarily through its informal contacts with Covenant Presbyterian Church, which had been ongoing over a number of years.

Suburbanization also challenged the downtown church and confronted it with a hard choice: retain its historic sacred space in the changing urban public square or migrate to the outskirts of the city. In 1961 the decision was made to stay at the corner of Roxboro and Main—thus, the often-read statement about First Presbyterian Church: "Downtown by history and by choice." Completion of the Christian Education Building in 1964 attested to the congregation's resolve, and Pastor David Currie (1963-68) promoted a broad-based urban mission outreach. The

Christian witness in the city expanded under successors Wallace Alston, Jr. (1969-74), Samuel R. Hope (1975-79), and talented associate ministers, including John B. Rogers, Charles Raynal, David Hester, the first woman associate Carter Smith (1981-84), Arabella Meadows-Rogers (1985-92), and Lori E. Pistor (1993-2003). The church's day school and the Presbyterian Urban Ministry became the most visible and continuing manifestations of the urban witness during those years.

Pursuit of this witness continued to mark the ministry of Joseph S. Harvard, Pastor (1980-2013), and Marilyn Turner Hedgpeth, Associate Pastor (2004-present). Links have been formed with Durham's African-American community by establishing a partner relationship with Fisher Memorial United Holy Church and with the larger diverse community by opening the church's buildings for the use of many public and non-profit agencies and through active involvement in the Durham Presbyterian Council and Durham Congregations in Action. As Rabbi John Friedman graciously phrased it on one of his visits, "First Presbyterian Church is the central religious address in Durham."

Prepared by Peter Fish, Church Historian

Mission Study – 2014

In the spring of 2014, the Mission Study Committee was formed as part of the interim process to discern our future direction in order to inform the process of calling our next senior pastor. The previous Senior Pastor retired after 33 years of productive service to First Presbyterian Church and the Durham community, creating the vacancy and providing the church with the opportunity to select its first new Senior Pastor in more than 30 years. The Session designated the Mission Study Committee (MSC) to coordinate the process of leading the congregation through a comprehensive self-study of the church as a required step before the church elects a Pastoral Nominating Committee.

The dedicated committee of nine church members, in consultation with the interim pastor, began its work in April and concluded the task in September. The committee met regularly and coordinated the fact-finding activities among the committee members to glean information about the church, the community in which we live, worship and serve and to gather perspectives about the church and its future direction from community leaders and members. The committee collected data and figures to inform the congregational conversations in late summer and early fall.

The MSC used the results of their research to develop a profile of the congregation and its vision for the future, as well as a snapshot of its immediate neighborhood and the larger

community. They carefully considered the findings of the research and the feedback from the congregation to discern where God is leading First Presbyterian in the future, where we need to grow and the qualities we would like to see in our next Senior Pastor.

Summary of the Mission Study Committee Activities

The committee was tasked with seeking discernment for our future role:

- Self-examination of where we've been
- Discernment of new needs
- Fact finding about the community and congregation – finances, demographics, needs, hopes

As a first step, the committee divided into teams of two to tackle the research required of the study and developed an aggressive timeline to complete the work by September. The major components were community demographic research, church-specific demographic and financial research, focus groups with community leaders, congregational survey and congregational conversations. Our work encompassed the following areas:

- Studying the community where we worship and serve
- Engaging community leaders in conversations about the church's role in the community
- Conducting an internal analysis of church membership, finances, and activities
- Engaging congregational members through surveys and conversations
- Ultimately: determining church priorities and opportunities for personal spiritual and congregational growth as we move forward to call a pastor.

Throughout the process, the MSC kept the congregation informed of progress through periodic announcements during worship, newsletter articles, email messages and Facebook posts and by posting findings and interim information on the church website. On August 3, the MSC presented the results of the research on demographics, community leader focus groups, congregational demographics and finances as well as the results of the congregational survey to inform the congregational conversations in August and September. The program included a Powerpoint presentation, time for questions and a beginning to the congregational conversations. The presentation was also posted to the church website and Facebook page. The church newsletter had frequent links back to this presentation as well.

The Committee's work proceeded according to the following schedule:

April – The committee convened and began to plan for its work on April 15.

May – Committee members, in pairs, began collecting research on Durham demographics, the demographics of the membership and the financial history of the church over the last 10 years. The MSC also began planning for focus groups with community leaders and a congregational survey.

June – On June 4 and 5, lunch and focus-group sessions were held with 18 community leaders to discern their historical interaction with First Presbyterian, to share their projected needs for the future and to ask their advice on future direction. In addition, to begin the process of soliciting input from the congregation, a congregational survey was shared via email and paper copies.

July – In early July the results of the congregational survey were available, and the MSC processed the information collected to date from the community and church demographics, church finances, focus groups and the survey. Together, the MSC developed a presentation for the first Sunday in August to share with the congregation and to inform the congregational conversation portion of the process.

August – On August 3, the MSC presented their preliminary findings to the Sunday School classes assembled together in Watts Hill Hall. The session included an opportunity for questions and answers, and the large gathering split into 3 groups to begin the congregational conversation process. Additional congregational conversations were held with African members, the Scratch class on their weekend retreat and the Lectionary Class. Plans were made for further conversations in September.

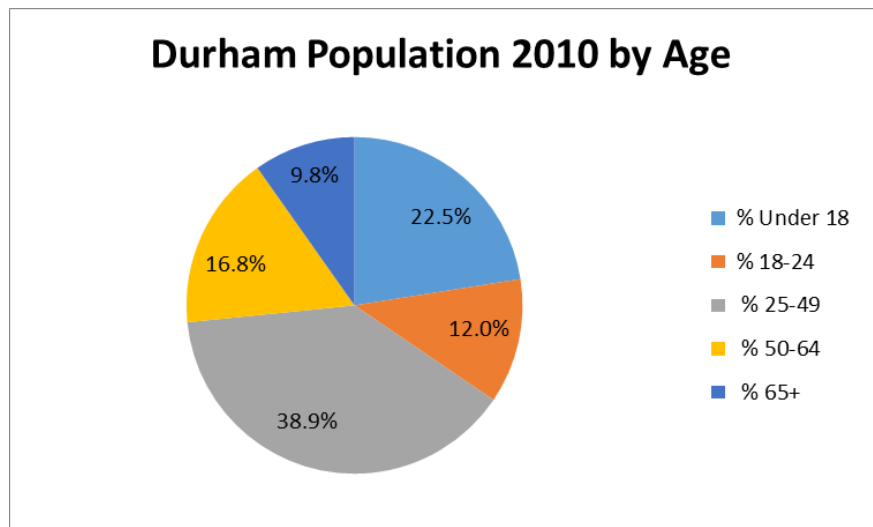
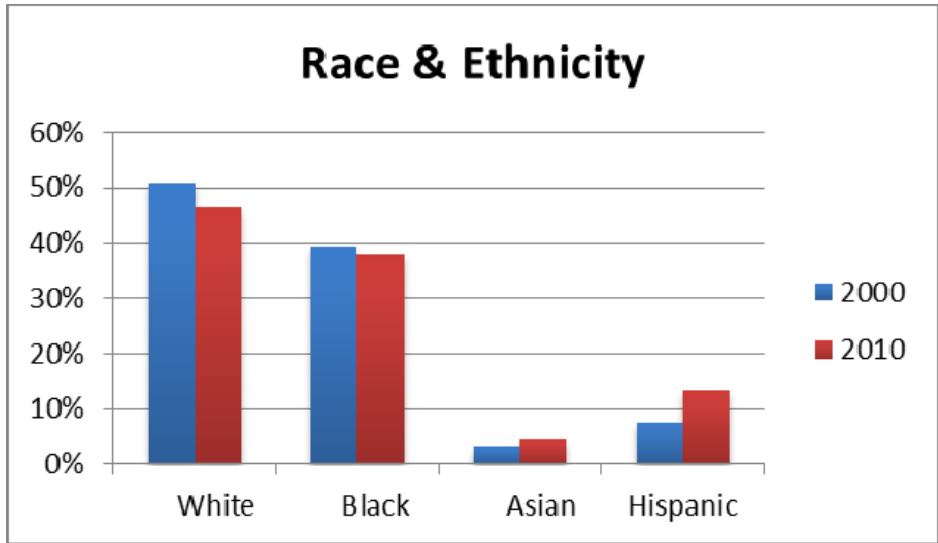
September – Congregational Conversations continued throughout the month, including with the youth, Presbyterian Women and a variety of Sunday School classes. An additional afternoon session and a midweek evening session were held to attract those who may not attend Sunday School or who missed an earlier opportunity. The MSC also began drafting their report, particularly the sections summarizing the findings of the preliminary research.

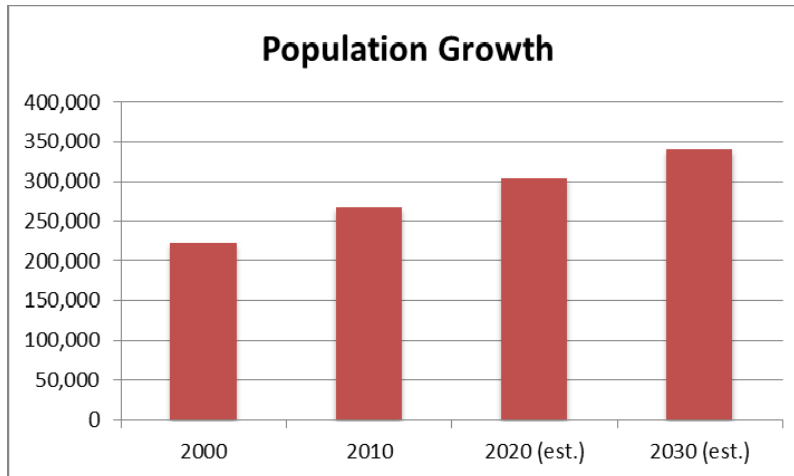
The Changing Demographics of Durham

Durham is a diverse, growing community, one of the most diverse and fastest growing counties in the state. According to the 2010 Census, women outnumber men, and, racially and ethnically, Durham County does not have a “majority population.” The number of people of Hispanic or Latino origin more than doubled between 2000 and 2010.

Durham has a comparatively young population, with more than half under the age of 35 and a median age of 32. The presence of two universities in the county increases the numbers of residents between the ages of 18 and 49. The age distribution is projected to change over the next 20 years, with the over 65 population expected to increase by at least 5 percentage points.

Over 50% of the population has advanced educational degrees including a comparatively large number with doctorates. On the other hand, the County has a relatively high poverty rate, with over 9% of the population on food stamps and 22% of children living below the poverty level in 2010. Service sector jobs represent 57% of the total.





The Church is on a Demographic Fault Line

In its early days the Church, at the corner of Main and Roxboro Streets, was in the middle of Durham’s growing prosperity – not far from the train station and within walking distance of the large homes that were eventually built for those who benefitted from that prosperity. But, in subsequent decades, the neighborhood changed and the corner the church occupies marked the division between declining residential areas to the east and a moribund downtown on the west. The Church was sitting on the fault line of urban change. Few members lived in nearby neighborhoods, and the congregation’s mission outreach focused largely on those living to the east while everyone hoped that downtown could be renewed.

It takes only a short walk down Main St. or Chapel Hill St. or several streets that intersect them to know that renewal is here. Depending on your definition of downtown, there are currently between 1,000 and 2,000 new apartments under construction and over 800 new hotel rooms. The influx of new residents to market-price, new apartments will far more than double the number of downtown residents. The neighborhood to the west of Roxboro Street is changing dramatically. It is reported that the new residents run the gamut from 20-somethings to retired people.

To the east, there are also signs of change as older houses are rehabilitated, and gentrification is beginning to be seen in the Cleveland/Holloway Street district. On the other hand, many of the neighbors to the east are still challenged by substandard housing, marginal employment, crime and all the problems of poverty. The church is located within a concentration of social service agencies that address these challenges: the County’s Social Service and Health Departments, Urban Ministries, Genesis Home, Durham Housing Authority, to name a few. First Presbyterian is still on the fault line of urban change.

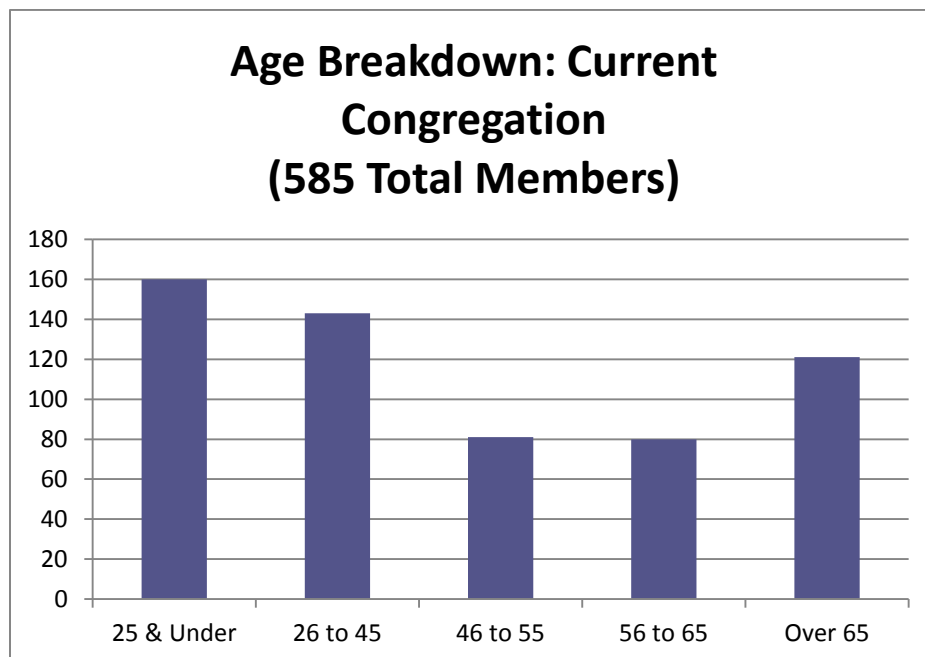
An analysis of the census tracts surrounding the church demonstrates some of the differences found between east and west. (See Appendix A for a comparison of 2010 census information across tracts and with Durham County as a whole.) To the west and northwest, the population has a higher percentage of white residents, while those to the east have significantly higher populations of African-Americans. The Hispanic population is relatively high in all tracts except downtown and southwest. Higher than average concentrations of people under 18 are found in tracts located in northeast central Durham. All but one tract has a higher than average proportion of renter-occupied housing.

Demographics of First Presbyterian

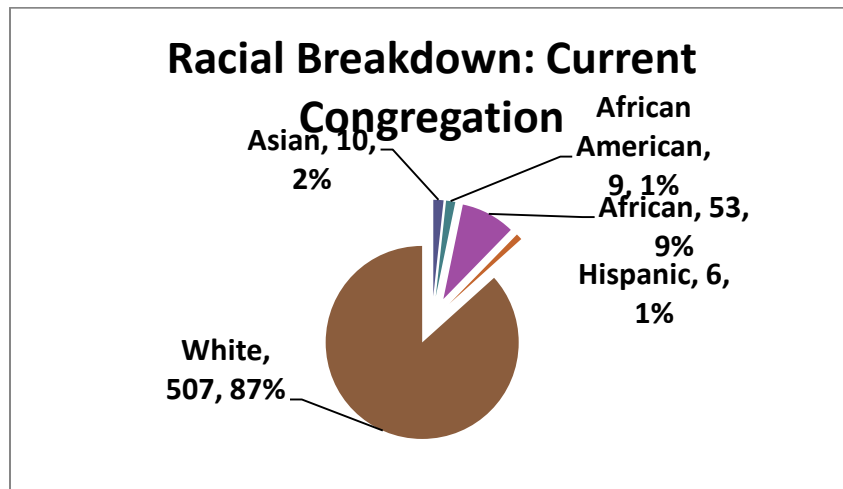
As part of our larger conversations, we asked ourselves: does our church community reflect the broader community in which we live, work and serve?

As of 2013, First Presbyterian had 585 total active members. This was about a 20% decrease from 2004, when FPC had 643 total active members. Over that ten-year period, the active membership peaked in 2005 at 650 members, bottomed out in 2010 at 533 members and has increased since 2010 at an average rate of about 2.5% per year.

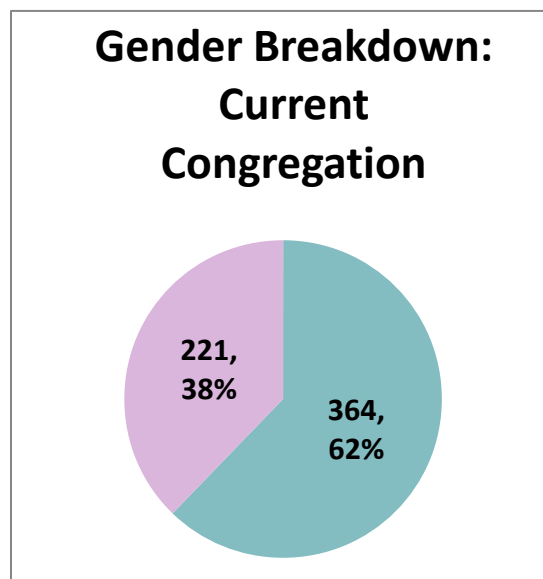
Age: As of 2013, 27% of FPC's members were 25 years old or younger, 24% were between 26 and 45, 28% were between 46 and 65 and 21% were over 65. Although this distribution has remained fairly stable over the last ten years, most of the church's growth since 2010 has come in the 26-to-55 age range.



Race/Ethnicity: As of 2013, FPC's congregation was 87% white, 9% African, 2% Asian, 1% African-American, and 1% Hispanic. Although FPC's congregation has remained between 85% and 90% white over the last ten years, the congregation has grown somewhat more diverse in that more minority groups are represented in meaningful numbers. For example, in 2013 FPC had 10 Asian members and 6 Hispanic members, whereas in 2004 FPC had only 1 member from each of those groups. FPC's African community continues to comprise the most significant minority group within the congregation.



Gender: As of 2013, FPC's congregation was 62% female and 38% male. This is the most female-heavy the congregation has been over the last ten years, though during that period it has never been less than 53% female.



Other demographic information from the congregational survey:

- 65% indicate in survey that they have post graduate work or degree
- 80% work in professional, healthcare, education, government or “other” professions
- 53% have lived in this area for 20 or more years
- 50% of families have an income of \$75,000 or above
- More than 50% did not grow up Presbyterian

Review of the Sources and Uses of Financial Resources at First Presbyterian Church

As part of the Mission Study process, we also engaged in an analysis of the budget and finances of First Presbyterian Church. As part of this analysis, we sought to answer the following questions:

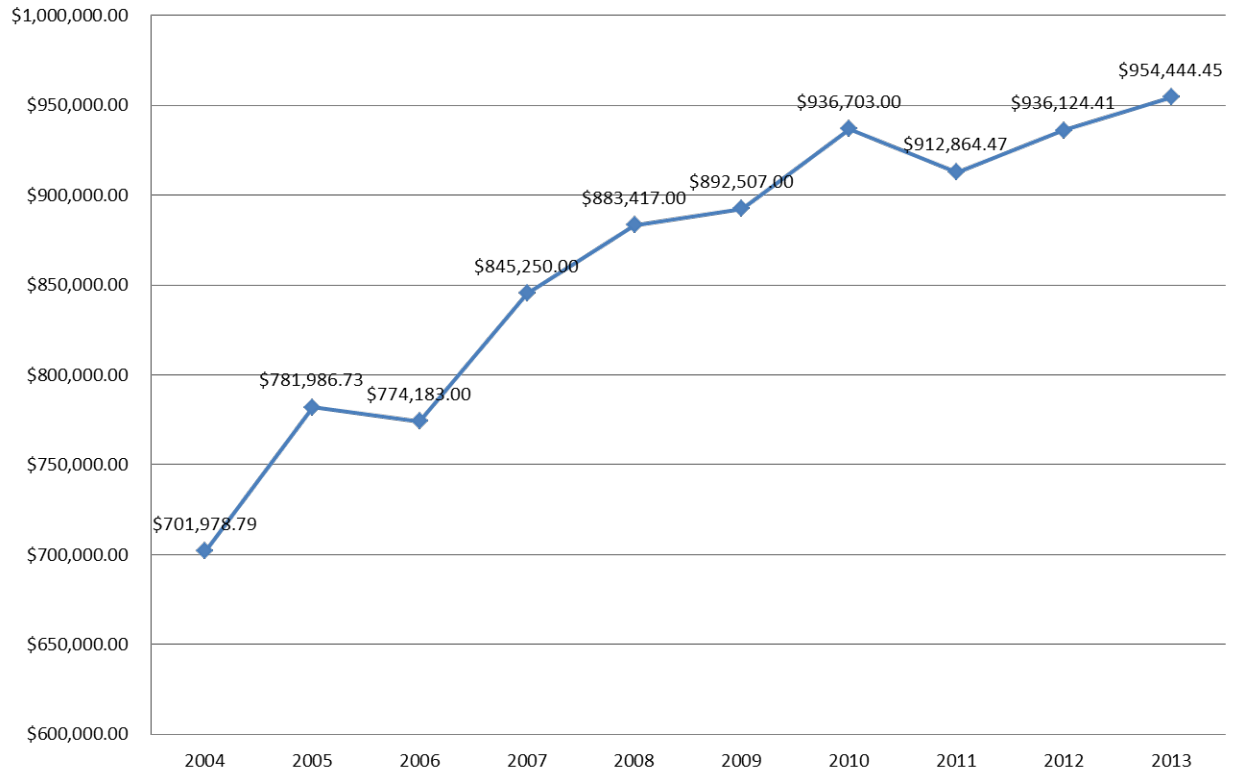
- What is the size of First Presbyterian Church’s annual budget, and how are these dollars allocated?
- How much revenue does First Presbyterian Church collect on an annual basis, and what is the source of those revenues?
- What have been the trends in sources and uses of funds over the past 10 years?
- How do the finances of First Presbyterian Church compare to peer churches in our region?

It should be noted that this analysis focuses solely on financial data. In addition to being generous with their financial resources, the members of First Presbyterian Church are also generous with their time and talents. However, this analysis does not attempt to measure those significant contributions of volunteer time and skills, nor does it attempt to measure the value of First Presbyterian Church as an important location for community meetings and gatherings.

Expenditures

First Presbyterian Church's total expenditures in 2013 were \$954,444. Except for a couple of unusual years (see Total Expenditures, 2004-2013), First Presbyterian's budget has grown at a fairly steady rate over the last 10 years. Overall, total expenditures at First Presbyterian have increased 36% since 2004, or an average of 3.6% per year.

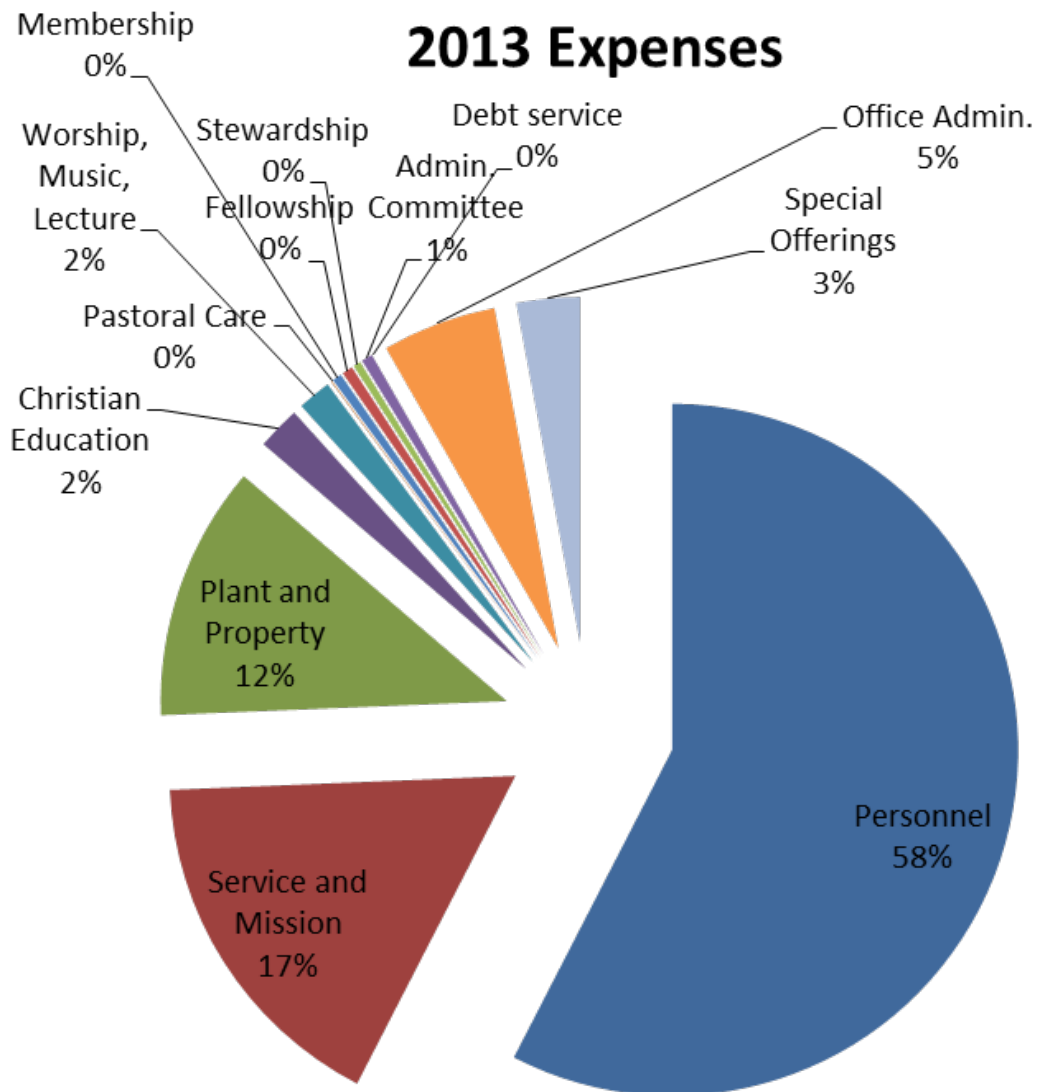
Total Expenditures (2004 - 2013)

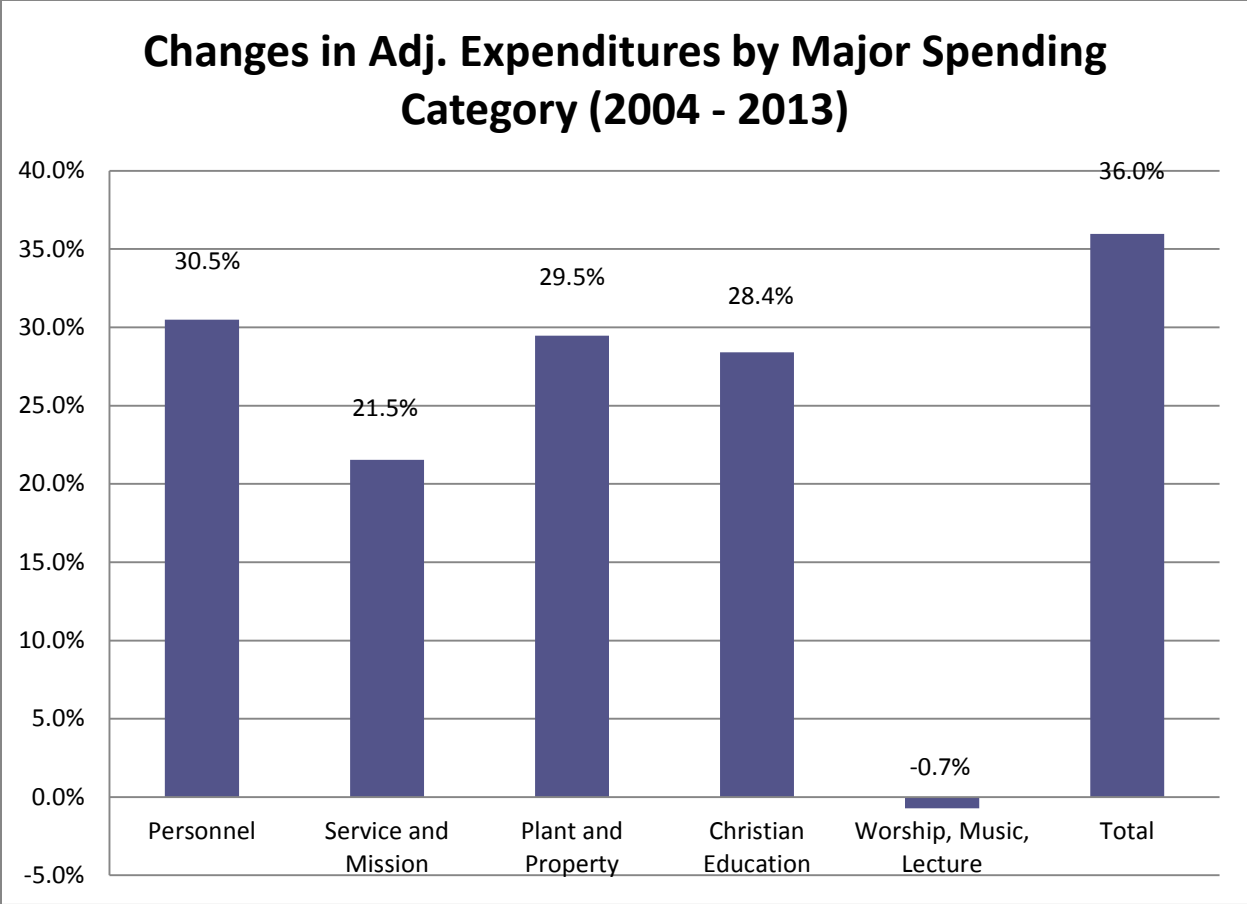


First Presbyterian's budget is comprised of twelve primary spending categories that roughly correspond to the church's committee structure. These include personnel; service and mission; plant and property; Christian education; worship, music, and lecture; pastoral care; membership; fellowship; and stewardship; along with three operational categories (administrative committee, office administration, and special offerings). The vast majority of First Presbyterian's budget (87%) is expended on three categories (see 2013 expenses): personnel (58%), service and mission (17%, or 20%, if including special offerings) and plant and property (12%). These three main categories include much of the "hard" costs of the church's operations, including wages and salaries for staff, utilities for heating and cooling the building and benevolences. The other categories are all very small percentages of the total budget, though these categories (such as Christian education, worship, stewardship and fellowship) represent, in many ways, the life blood of the ministry of First Presbyterian Church and are

augmented by significant contributions of time and talent from church members and other volunteers.

Over the last 10 years, the main spending categories have roughly followed the overall growth in spending at First Presbyterian Church (see table below with adjusted expenditures 2004-2013), with personnel expenditures growing the fastest (30.5%), followed by plant and property (29.5%) and service and mission (21.5%). It should also be noted that Christian education, though a smaller spending category in nominal terms (\$19,345 in 2013), also grew at a rapid rate (28.4% over the ten-year period) in response to the important growth in children and young families at First Presbyterian Church over that time period.





Revenues

To meet its expenditures, First Presbyterian Church takes in almost \$1 million in revenues annually. In the most recent year (2013), total revenues at First Presbyterian were \$943,302. The vast majority of this revenue (89%) comes from pledge payments to First Presbyterian. Other smaller but important revenue sources (based on 2013 revenues) include the following:

- General offering (3%)
- Unpledged contributions (3%)
- Special offerings (2%)
- Pennies for Hunger (1%)
- Self-help groups/building use (1%)

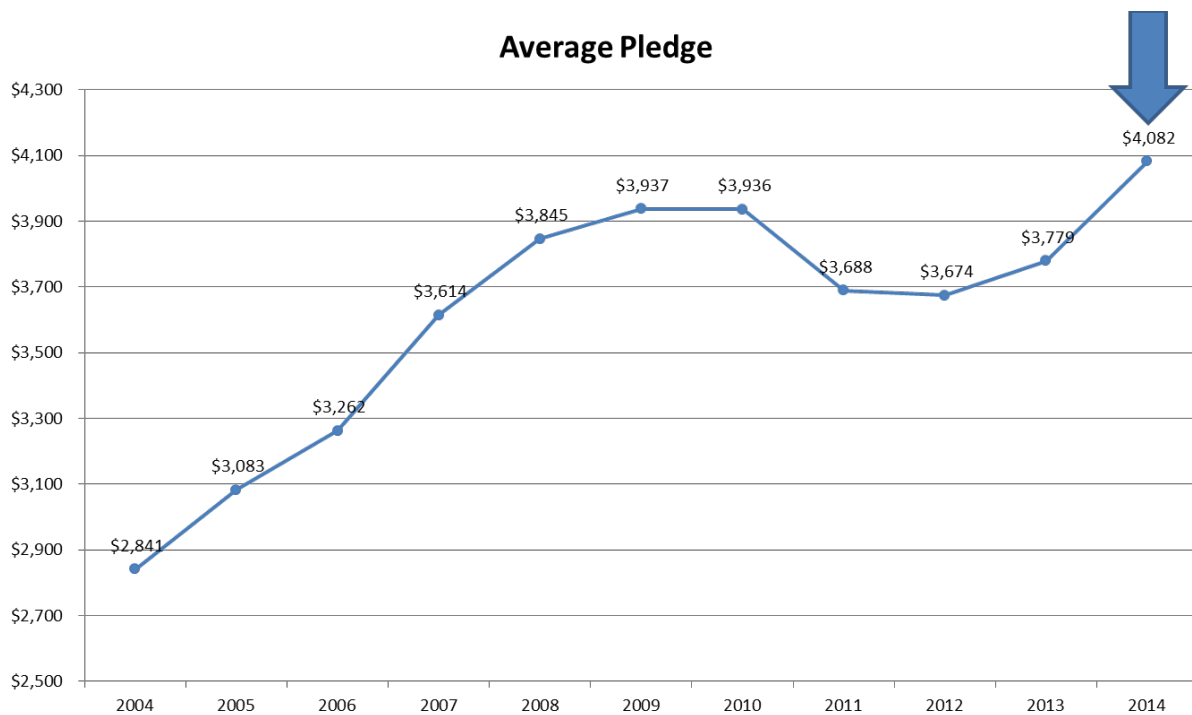
The members of First Presbyterian and others who contribute to the life and ministry of the church are very generous and have been increasingly so over the past ten years. The total amount pledged in 2014 was \$812,265. This represents a 35.5% increase over the 11-year period 2004 – 2014, though this growth in revenues has proceeded in two stages. From 2004

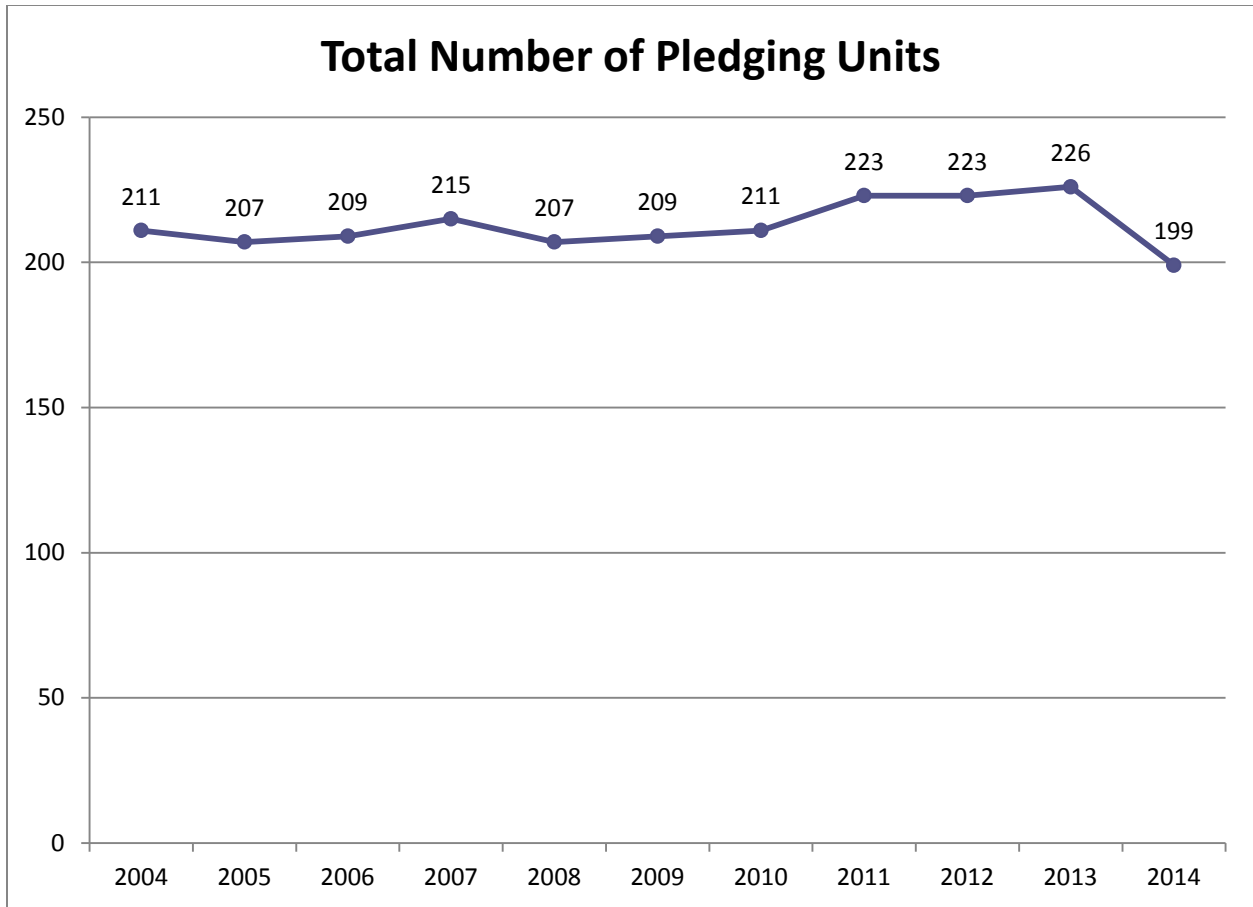
until the effects of the Great Recession hit in 2010, the total amount pledged grew 38% (or about 5.5% annually) to \$830,411. Since then, from 2011 to 2014 (with the exception of 2013), the total amount pledged has remained in a range between \$810,000 and \$820,000.

This changing revenue picture reflects the unique and changing demographics of First Presbyterian Church. On the one hand, First Presbyterian's members are extremely generous. The average pledge in 2014 was an all-time high of \$4,082. Except for a three-year period following the Great Recession (see Changes in Giving), the average pledge has grown at a steady annual pace, from \$2,841 in 2004 to \$4,082 in 2014 (a 44% increase). Even in inflation-adjusted terms, First Presbyterian's annual pledge has grown almost 14% since 2004. In a comparison with five other well-established Presbyterian churches in the Triangle (Westminster, Trinity Avenue, First Presbyterian in Raleigh, University Presbyterian in Chapel Hill and Church of the Reconciliation in Chapel Hill), First Presbyterian was the second most generous in contributions per member (based on data from the PCUSA website).

At the same time (see Total Number of Pledging Units), as the saints of the church have departed and younger families have joined the church, the number of total pledging units has remained fairly constant over the past ten years, even experiencing a drop during the current interim period in 2014.

Changes in Giving:





Overall, over the past 10 years, First Presbyterian Church has been able to finance an expanding budget for staff, programs and benevolences with a generous and enthusiastic group of pledgers that has remained fairly constant in number.

Community Leader Feedback

On June 4 and 5, community leaders from 18 non-profit and government agencies joined us for lunch and a facilitated conversation. The leaders were asked four questions:

- Describe how you think the community views our church and our role in the community.
- Describe the past work of First Presbyterian Church with your agency and the communities you serve. Does the Church have particular strengths that are helpful in your work?
- What challenges do you anticipate in the next five years in which First Presbyterian can or should play a role in partnership with your agency and the community? Are there any unmet or emerging needs that we need to be aware of?
- Is there anything else you think the Church should consider as we discern our future role?

In lively and engaged conversations (see full list of participants and notes from conversations in Appendix B), community leaders indicated that First Presbyterian is a pillar and leader in the community, an inclusive and hospitable congregation, an outspoken advocate for social justice, and a leader in developing needed community services and programs. They further indicated that First Presbyterian has effectively leveraged the influence and resources of the faith community as a whole. Leaders indicated that First Presbyterian leads when community needs are identified, acts as a significant advocacy partner, and provides strong financial support for many community organizations. It was also noted that First Presbyterian is not as universally “known” in the community as we would hope and that there is little visible outside the church facilities that indicates the breadth and depth of the ministry and service that occurs here.

During these conversations, we learned that there are more than 2,000 new rental units opening within a 1.5 mile radius of the church in the next year, providing a new opportunity for outreach and membership. The downtown library may also be closing for a period of renovations if a bond passes, which may result in new requests for the use of our space and parking. Community leaders suggested the following opportunities for First Presbyterian to consider in future outreach:

First Presbyterian could be a **conduit for newcomers to connect with Durham’s agencies and organizations and become active in the community**, a welcoming presence.

Downtown population growth can be a source of **new membership** and opportunities to serve.

The **Church needs to market itself** and find ways to connect with new residents and visitors.

With increase in population downtown will **come more parking challenges. The church could**

advocate for use of public transportation and transit development.

A major new initiative is that of the ***Mayor and Chair of the County Commissioners to address poverty*** in the community by bringing all the players together and targeting resources at specific neighborhoods.

NCCU is looking at its role in the poverty initiative and ways to engage the entire NCCU community. **NCCU is poised to become a potential new partner in our outreach efforts.**

United Way is changing its focus to agencies that serve young children, despite a growing population of older adults. It still will fund agencies addressing basic needs. Other sources of funds serving seniors are also dropping.

Education system: no representatives from the school system, although they were invited.

Community leaders also shared specific suggestions for community service and outreach:

The Church can serve to grow the numbers of involved people by serving as a **conduit for people to connect to community action** by directing members to existing platforms for service (e.g. Habitat, Urban Ministries, EDCI, Genesis Home, etc.) rather than itself providing direct service.

Advocacy is needed to “stiffen the backbones of elected officials” because of increased uncertainty about the future role of government, particularly at the state and federal levels, and the impact of cutbacks on local government and non-profits.

The new pastor needs to **sit at the table with business.** Business leaders indicated little knowledge of our historical involvement in the community. It is an opportunity for outreach and marketing.

With the current increase in “luxury” development, there is an increasing need for **affordable housing**, as well as supportive housing programs. They hope to see us advocate for this.

We need to be aware and caring for the needs of our own members which are likely to be more diverse than we know.

The Church **could engage in competitive philanthropy, challenging other congregations to match our efforts.** We need to leverage what we do, host more meetings like these meetings and use our facilities to promote community.

Community partners discussed the book, *Toxic Charity*, with its emphasis on using our energies to help people help themselves (e.g. focus on job creation, microfinancing). We were encouraged to **evaluate the results of our efforts.**

Congregational Survey

Conducted during June and early July, 214 responses were received to the survey. A full copy of the survey results is in Appendix C.

Among the major findings from the survey, the following themes emerged:

- Confidence in our identity and shared values
- Meaningful worship
- Engaging in acts of service
- Acting on Christian faith on social, political & economic issues
- Helping each other in times of trouble

The congregation highly values our involvement in community issues and believes the church should

- Call attention to social, community & world issues from the pulpit & in study groups
- Provide social services
- Spend time working with community & social action groups
- Partner with other faith groups

We found the congregation highly values the worship service and quality of music. High value is placed on an intellectually challenging sermon and the involvement of children and youth in the service. We are largely pleased with an 11 am worship service, though some would like it to be earlier. The music program is strongly valued, though some members indicated a desire for occasional contemporary music. Many indicated discomfort with “new hymns.”

The survey listed ten images or dominant roles in which clergy variously orient their ministry. The roles below were the top responses.

- Minister of the Word/Teacher of the Congregation
- Friend/Fellow Traveler
- Social Activist
- Spiritual Guide
- Celebrant/Worship Leader

While the minister and the church’s social outreach were the top items that drew most respondents to the church, the minister did not make the top reasons why members stay at First Presbyterian once they have joined. What keeps people here and engaged are the

following qualities of First Presbyterian:

- Social Outreach
- Music Program
- Worship Style
- Fellowship
- My Friends are Here

Among the other strong themes from the survey are

- Families with young children find it challenging to participate
- General desire to deepen personal relationships with God
- Increased reliance on web and email for communication
- General satisfaction with worship, music, fellowship, Christian Education and the diversity of the congregation, but would like to strengthen each area
- Increased awareness and information concerning our support of the Day School

Survey respondents were the most active participants in church life and stewardship.

Congregational Conversations

Congregational conversations began on August 3 and continued through September. The full schedule and notes from the conversations are in Appendix D.

The following five questions were asked in each of the congregational conversations:

- Why do you participate in the life of First Presbyterian Church?
- What do you think God is calling FPC to do and be?
- How can we strengthen the congregation in response to God's call?
- What does this mean for the Session, the Diaconate, congregation and you personally?
- What skills, experience and personal characteristics in our new pastor would be most supportive of our work?

The conversations were rich and thoughtful, providing further insights into the hopes and needs of the congregation. The notes from the conversations are attached, and strengths, areas for improvement and qualities for the next Pastor are reflective of those conversations.

Strengths

First Presbyterian is building on a firm foundation of strengths, identified by members of the congregation as well as community leaders throughout this Mission Study process.

Our approach to our faith is an asset: our progressive theology, our worship style, our music and our Christian Education programming, particularly for adults, were recognized as defining our lives together. The “intellectual approach” to our spiritual growth was mentioned by many as highly valued, making First Presbyterian a comfortable place to explore, question and grow spiritually. Our progressive theology fosters a spirit of learning, inquiry and openness to ideas and is not rigid – and makes us open to being “reformed and always being reforming.” Our traditional worship service and the quality of our music are cited by many as providing comfort and inspiration to tackle the week ahead.

Both the community and the congregation emphasized our commitment to service, mission and social justice: it is what attracts and retains members, and we have a solid reputation in the community for our work as advocates and leaders in responding to community needs. Many cited First Presbyterian and individual members as a catalyst in the faith community and as leaders in creating new programs and services to meet needs.

Our members emphasized a strong sense of community, first and foremost in being a welcoming, hospitable congregation. Our hospitality has been extended – and greatly valued – by our many African members who expressed incredible gratitude for the love and support of First Presbyterian. Members also clearly cite our strong support and pastoral care for one another as one of the great strengths of our church. From our youth to our elderly members, we consistently refer to the church as “family.” We are also recognized by the community for our hospitality to people in need and as a welcoming gathering spot for meetings and events, big and small. From open doors after a major ice storm and Hurricane Katrina, to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, a September 11 interfaith service and Durham CAN Delegates’ Assemblies, First Presbyterian is truly, as Rabbi Friedman said, “Durham’s central religious address.”

Finally, our relative inclusivity and diversity are highly valued by the congregation. And, as much as it is valued, our aspiration to be even more inclusive is an exciting opportunity in which we can continue to grow. The strong recognition that we are still very segregated and a predominantly white congregation on Sunday morning and that our demographics do not reflect the community in which we live and work were cited by many, particularly that so few members live in the neighborhood to the east of the church: we view that recognition and aspiration to be a great foundation upon which we can grow together.

Recommended Improvements

Like most organizations, the areas we have identified for improvement are also rooted in our strengths. The Mission Study process allowed us to ask questions that had not been asked for many years and have given us a fresh perspective on ways we can strengthen our congregational family.

Most pronounced, many indicated a lack of knowledge about church priorities, activities, policies and practices. That members want to know more and be more engaged in the life of the congregation is exciting. Transparency in leadership decision making needs to be a high priority moving forward. Ideas to facilitate greater communication include posting minutes of Session and Diaconate meetings on the church website, a general overhaul and regular attention to the church website, e-newsletter and Facebook (and other social media as it changes). Creative ideas included even posting podcasts of sermons for those who cannot attend and more opportunities for “congregational” conversations.

In addition, the Committee was surprised that quite a few prominent leaders and organizations were not as familiar with the work happening at First Presbyterian as we had assumed. It was striking that those newer to the community were not familiar with our history and reputation and noted that there was no “easy way” to find out what happens inside the doors at First Presbyterian. The irony of being in the “information age” yet lacking knowledge about how to find out what is happening in the church is palpable. With the growth of downtown residents and businesses, coupled with the great human needs to the east of the church, communication about who we are, what we do, what we offer and how we serve the community is greatly needed both inside and outside the congregation.

While many members said they enjoy the existing fellowship groups, many others offered ideas for improvement, particularly for more intergenerational interaction. Our older members lament missed opportunities to get to know our younger members, and, conversely, many of our young families need guidance and support. Even our high school youth asked to be paired with older members of the congregation. It is a wonderful opportunity to bridge generational divides. Many suggested creating fellowship groups by neighborhood/area or by interest (social justice, books, art, music, food) and finding ways to structure more opportunities for intergenerational friendships to flourish.

Our families with young children are struggling to connect with one another and to other groups within the church. Concerns have been expressed about whether children are forming friendships that will carry through to Youth Group and beyond. Sunday School attendance is low in certain age ranges. Our families now include dual-working parents, same-sex parents, single parents, blended families and families from different cultures, such as from our African

community. 'Stay-at-home' parents may be either gender and may feel more isolated than in the past. We need new ministry ideas that recognize the diversity of our families, encourage the formation of friendships and strengthen Christian education and service.

Coordination was mentioned frequently as a need, particularly for pastoral care and service opportunities. Examples of members needing help and not receiving it in a timely manner, of young families needing support in order to be more actively engaged in church activities, of missed opportunities to participate in service projects, of a general lack of knowledge about how to participate in projects, all lead back to the need for stronger coordination and management. Creating a system to quickly assess new members' strengths and desires for involvement and attaching them to service opportunities was cited. Older members are requesting a coordinated "buddy" system for checking in on each other, particularly for those living alone. Young families need to know when child care is an option for service projects and are yearning for relationships with those who can provide guidance, advice and a bit of experience as they navigate parenthood.

While our worship and music are greatly loved and valued by the congregation, we also heard a consistent "openness" to try new styles of worship and music, *occasionally*. There is a general angst about keeping our teenagers and young adults engaged. Some noted that, for our spiritual growth, we need more time for meditation as well as more space for joy and praise in our worship service. And there is a general feeling that "We look out a lot – we need to look UP more," reflecting a desire for more spirituality and inspiration to happen at our worship service and in Christian Education.

Finally, throughout all the conversations and the survey, was a desire for individual members of the congregation to being given the space and structure to grow our leadership capacity. As one member said, "we have a lot of brain power in this church – we need to use it." Many mentioned examples of wanting to lead and not knowing how to work within the structure.

Throughout this process, there have been frequent "aha" moments as individuals have realized that WE are the church more than the "pastor" is the church. "It is our church, our worship, our mission, our education." There is a great opportunity to capture the energy and excitement that members are feeling about their own spiritual and leadership growth – with the Session and new pastor providing the structure, the inspiration and space for it to flourish.

Proposed Vision, Mission and Core Values

In 2010, the Plumb Line Committee reviewed and reaffirmed the welcome statement and the mission statement that were already in existence and articulated our core values. The Mission Study process has affirmed those consistently, and **we recommend that we keep all of them:**

First Presbyterian Church welcomes all who worship here. We honor and celebrate the human diversity and unity that God gives us in Christ. We welcome individuals of every age, race, nationality, gender, ability, sexual orientation and economic circumstance to participate fully in the life of the church.

Mission

Worshipping God in community and bearing witness to God's love and justice in the world.

Core Values

Reformed Worship: Through a shared liturgy of Word and Sacrament, FPC invites all, in creative and faithful ways, to focus heart, soul, and mind to the Glory of God.

Diversity and Inclusivity: As God has claimed us in the waters of baptism with our differences, we are called to invite and nurture a diverse and inclusive community.

Faith Exploration: FPC welcomes and encourages all to explore the call to discipleship and to consider questions of faith at all points on their journey with the Risen Christ.

Pastoral Care: God has loved us first; so too, we love and care for one another, nurturing mind, body and spirit throughout life's journey.

Historic Placement: "Downtown by history and by choice," we are committed to being a witness to God's steadfast love and justice in the heart of the city.

Social Mission: FPC advocates for social justice and responds to the "cries of the poor," remembering Jesus' promise to be found among the hungry, homeless, sick and imprisoned.

Faithful Stewardship: Called to be stewards of the gifts God has provided, we support the foundation that enables this faith community to be generous in hospitality and in faithful ministry.

Community: As a reflection of God's beloved community, we seek to affirm and challenge one another, rejoicing together as the Body of Christ.

Suggested Qualities for the Next Pastor

This congregation has been blessed with extraordinary leadership for the past 30 years and beyond, and our study has affirmed a desire to maintain that tradition. First Presbyterian is poised to grow on its firm foundation, and our members are seeking a new pastor who will inspire us to grow spiritually and in service to our community and the world. As beautifully described by our African members, we are seeking a “shepherd who hears his flock.” In seeking a new Pastor, the members of FPC have expressed a desire for a leader with the following qualities:

Inclusive

Excellent communicator

Shares our core values

Builds relationships

Engages civically

Preaches inspirational, thought-provoking sermons

Experienced/committed to working in an urban congregation (ideally with experience in a city in transition)

Focuses on facilitating lay leadership

Our hope is that we will call a new leader who will “light a fire to motivate us to use our skills and gifts.”