

# Mission Study Report

## Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg

Jamesburg, New Jersey

November 05, 2023

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## Our Mission Statement:

We are created by God, called by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a supportive and caring family of faith who shares the love of Christ and all of God's blessings with our local community and the world.

## This Mission Study:

We acknowledge that it is far easier to state our mission than it is to realize it. The ability to fulfill our mission lies hidden underneath our understanding of who we are. Understanding who we are was complicated. Our process of discovery has taken two years. During which time we built a loving relationship with our Transitional Pastor, conducted a Congregational Survey (The Holy Cow Congregational Assessment Tools, formed small (discussion) groups to assess and interpret data from the survey, and formed a PNC to piece it all together and discern how best to realize our mission. Dialogue was a critical component of our process. By dialogue we mean focused conversation, engaged intentionally with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning thoughts and actions. It engaged our hearts as well as our minds.

## Key Theological Views and Worship Process:

We are an open and affirming congregation, meaning that we are open to all races, ethnicities, ages, genders, and sexualities.

We believe in life and death that we are God's people. It is through the undefinable, unimaginable, unconditional love of the Lord Jesus Christ; the love of God; the forgiveness that is freely given to us through Jesus Christ our Savior; and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that we live and gather to worship and serve the Holy God who creates, redeems, and sustains us.

Sometimes these concepts of unconditional love and forgiveness are difficult for us to wrap our minds and hearts around when we witness the harm that is committed at the hands of others, and we want justice. Yet we trust the Lord will work through other humans for good, teaching and guiding along the way encouraging us to grow in the ways of Christ.

We offer a 10 a.m. worship service every Sunday morning, observing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of each month. Our worship service includes praise music, Lord's Prayer, hymns, call to worship, prayer of forgiveness, scripture readings and sermon. We hold a special Easter Sunday worship service with guest musical performers and two worship services on Christmas eve. We also hold gatherings on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.

# History of Our Church:

The early community now known as Jamesburg, was settled by Immigrants of Scottish and Scotch-Irish descent, many having Scottish Presbyterian conviction. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the general area was served by churches in Tennent, Cranbury, and Spotswood. As the community grew, primarily with the development and growth of the village as a railroad hub, so did the spiritual needs of the people.

James Buckelew, Jamesburg's namesake, built a schoolhouse in 1847 where the Presbyterian manse now stands. Mr. Buckelew was prompted to do so when a local Black child was denied admission to Monroe Township Schools. Mr. Buckelew had another purpose in mind for the school, and partitioned off an area and outfitted it with a pulpit and seats for religious worship. Area preachers would visit and preach on a semi-regular basis. It soon became evident that it was time to organize and build a new church.

Early in 1853 business leaders and others in the community began raising funds to build a new church. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1854, a committee appointed by the Presbytery of New Brunswick assembled in Jamesburg to organize the Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg, consisting of eleven founding members. Three weeks later, on June 26<sup>th</sup>, the church building was dedicated. The following year the schoolhouse was moved to the corner of Church Street and Gatzmer Avenue to make room for a new parsonage.

The Reverend J. Halstead Carroll was ordained and installed as the first pastor on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1855. The Reverend William M Wells served as pastor from 1858 to 1869, and the third pastor, the Reverend Dr. Benjamin S. Everitt was installed in 1870 and continued to serve for 27 years. He was very active in all aspects of church life and the local community. He also served as the chair of the Jamesburg Centennial Committee for the Independence Day celebration on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1876.

Despite early financial challenges, the church membership grew rapidly. In 1867 an addition was added to accommodate additional pews, and in 1871 and again in 1883, a social hall and two transept additions were added to accommodate social gatherings, as well as religious instruction and worship. At the time of the Centennial in 1876, church membership had grown to 424 and 381 children attended Sunday School.

Several additional renovations were accomplished over the years. An addition referred to as the "Buckelew Memorial" was completed in 1933. It was gifted by Mrs. Mary Townsend Helm, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Issac S. Buckelew. She was the wife of George A Helm, the President of the Helme Snuff Mill in Helmetta. Extensive renovations in the 1950s included the interior of the sanctuary, a new organ, hardwood floors, refurbished meeting rooms, and a new kitchen. The last major renovation completed in 2008 involved replacing the rear section of the church building with a large addition, and included new church offices and conference rooms, new classrooms, bathrooms, and an elevator. The new basement classrooms are currently rented to Mozart's and Einstein's Preschool, Kindergarten and Music Academy.

Other Noteworthy benefactors of the Presbyterian Church included additional bequests of land from the families of James Buckelew and Abraham S. Davison to bring the church property to its current size.

In recent years, the Presbyterian Church has served as a meeting place for several local organizations. The Round About Book Club, organized December 3, 1900, continues to hold meetings at the church. Many scout troops have been sponsored by the church, including Scout Troop #87 in the 1960s and early 70s, and is the current home for Boy Scout Troop 54 beginning in the 1980s. The food pantry, originally housed in the basement of the church, was replaced with a new building in 2010 and serves numerous area families and individuals with need.

The Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg has been a mainstay of community and religious life for Jamesburg and surrounding communities for 170 years and continues to play an integral role in service and spirit to its members and non-members alike.

## Our Facilities:

Our facilities include four separate buildings, all situated on our property at the corner of Gatzmer Avenue and West Church Street.

### Administration Building:

This building consists of two suites, one upstairs and one downstairs. The upstairs suite used to function as an apartment for rent; until it was vandalized several years ago. The downstairs suite used to function as the church office; now it serves as an annex to the Food Pantry. This building was built over one hundred years ago.

### Food Pantry:

This building consists of men's and women's lavatories and a warehouse. This is where food (dry and refrigerated) is processed, stored and distributed. This is a modern, prefabricated steel building.

### Manse:

This building consists of two stories, an attic and basement, which are for storage only. This has served as a residence for many pastors over the years. It is a five bedroom, one and a half bath house. As mentioned in this study we plan to temporarily lease this house to a non-profit affordable housing corporation.

### Main Building:

The Main Building consists of our Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Music Room, Conference Room, Office and Classrooms. The transepts of the Sanctuary open into the Hall, making it possible to proceed from Worship to Fellowship without having to go outside.

Our Sanctuary is wheelchair accessible and there is an open area where two or three people (including family) may find space to Worship. The congregation is seated on cushions in pews. The Sanctuary can seat more than two hundred people; not including the balcony which is reserved for the Production Team at the present time.

Fellowship Hall is the venue for our events and dinners; we can accommodate approximately 180 people. The Hall features our beautiful stained glass window depicting Jesus inviting children with open arms. The Hall is open to the main corridor that leads to the Music Room, Conference Room, Office, Lavatories and Elevator. When it is not in use by the congregation, or youth groups like the Scouts, Fellowship Hall is available to rent.

There are seven classrooms located on the second floor, three of those are available for use/rent; the remaining four are reserved for The RCCG and our Deacons. The second floor also has separate lavatories.

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## 2021 Church Statistical Report

**Church** Jamesburg PIN 4780  
**Presbytery** Coastlands  
**Address** 175 Gatzmer Ave, Jamesburg, NJ 08831  
**Phone** 732-521-1711 Fax 732-521-4535  
**Email** [jpresbychurch@gmail.com](mailto:jpresbychurch@gmail.com)  
**Web Site** [www.presbyterianchurchjamesburg.org](http://www.presbyterianchurchjamesburg.org)

**Membership**

Prior Active Members	183	Adjusted membership	183
<b>Gains</b>		<b>Losses</b>	
Certificate	0	Certificate	0
Youth Professions	0	Deaths	4
Professions & Reaffirmations	4	Deleted for any Other Reason	0
<b>Total Gains</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Total Losses</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total Ending Active Members</b>	<b>183</b>		

**Baptisms**

Presented by Others	5	Average Weekly Worship Attendance	29
At Confirmation	0	Female Members	107
All Other	0	Friends of the Congregation	30
		Ruling Elders on Session	12
		Do you have Deacons?	Yes

**Age Distribution of Active Members**

25 & Under	21
26 - 40	66
41 - 55	22
56 - 70	24
Over 70	50
<b>Total Age Distribution</b>	<b>183</b>

**People with Disabilities**

Hearing impairment	2
Sight impairment	0
Mobility impairment	10
Other impairment	4

**Christian Education**

Birth - 3	0	Grade 7	0
Age 4	0	Grade 8	0
Kindergarten	0	Grade 9	0
Grade 1	0	Grade 10	0
Grade 2	0	Grade 11	0
Grade 3	0	Grade 12	0
Grade 4	0	Young Adults	0
Grade 5	0	Over 25	12
Grade 6	0	Teachers/Officers	3
		<b>Total Christian Education</b>	<b>15</b>

**Racial Ethnic**

Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian	1	Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous	0
Black/African American/African	1	White	178
Middle Eastern/North African	0	Multiracial	0
Hispanic/Latino-a	3		
		<b>Total Racial Ethnic</b>	<b>183</b>

**Financial Data**

Annual Income	277,042	Mission Expenses	20,432
Annual Expenses	273,877	Personnel Expenses	74,942
		Facilities Expenses	100,859

# Our Ministries:

## Worship

Worship is an integral part of our ministry. We believe strongly that we confess and express our love for each other and the Trinity when we gather for worship. Many of our Church Teams support our belief in the importance of Worship. We work diligently to create a space where Music, Message and Media unite and motivate us to express our love of God, Jesus, The Holy Spirit and Neighbors.

To quote Theodore Roosevelt “Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain and difficulty” We believe that Faith is worth having...Amen!  
But faith, like love is intentional, it requires effort and the faithful will know pain, difficulty and doubt. We acknowledge that everyone who enters our church is on a personal journey and we are mindful that they may feel awkward and uncomfortable. We believe that visitors to our church will know we are faithful followers of Jesus Christ because we try our hardest to love them. We are searching for a pastor who believes the same and is keen to redirect our attention if/when that love is not in abundance.

## Food Pantry

Our Deacons operate a Food Pantry from a small warehouse on our property. The Food Pantry provides monthly food supplements to 125 families. Once a month, families receive meat, dairy and produce. They also receive clothing when available. The Pantry receives donations from Replenish (formerly Middlesex County Foods), Boy and Girl Scout Units, The US Postal Service, SEWA (Self Employed Women’s Association), YWCA/YMCA, and Saint James Catholic Church. The Pantry also receives donations from the public, and members of our church. If you were to ask a resident what our church does for the community, they would mention the Food Pantry. Every third Saturday of the month, before the sun rises, a line of cars forms on Gatzmer Avenue, and it does not disappear until late in the morning. This is what we are known for. This is how we serve the community. We acknowledge that our Food Pantry ministry is also potentially an opportunity to share Christ’s message with families as they wait in line to receive food. We know that we are called to serve the lord and his flock with passion, creativity, love and faith. We will pray that as we lean towards this idea that we will realize the way to fulfill this ministry. We are searching for a pastor who has the vision to help us share our faith with these families.

## Faith Alliances

Our church was a founding member of The Jamesburg Council of Churches, which used to be active in the community. During the season of Lent, we used to meet in our Fellowship Hall every Wednesday for dinner and devotion. The Council is inactive now; the last gathering was before the Pandemic. To our knowledge, none of the other churches that were part of the



Council has plans to reorganize because their ministers like our former pastor have retired or been transferred.

However, when one door closes another opens. We opened our doors to the Reformed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and The Ebenezer Baptist Church. Members of The RCCG gather for devotion, worship, fellowship and music. Locally they are known as the True Light Chapel of RCCG. The Baptist church sponsors classes to teach English to speakers of other languages. Most of their students are from Central and South America, but some are from Eastern Europe.

Our church is situated at the corner of Church Street and Gatzmer Avenue. As the street name implies, there was a time when the importance of our Church in the community could not be overstated. Today, our Church is one of eleven in a space of one square mile. Brothers and Sisters may worship at Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, and less-traditional houses. Further from town (three or more miles) there are nine additional houses of worship.

We believe that houses of worship should be able to cooperate if for no other goal than to welcome God's children with an abundance of love. But cooperation must be intentional, it is like faith because it requires effort, and it can be difficult. We have a rich history. We want to honor our predecessors and protect what we inherited from them. We also want to realize our mission. We are searching for a pastor who understands that delicate balance.

## Our Teams:

### Presbyterian Men's Council

Our Men's Council provides opportunities for people from our congregation to connect, share and serve. Monthly meetings consist of a home cooked meal, devotion and business. Throughout the year they organize and fund several dinners, and they invite anybody from the community to attend. Proceeds from these dinners go back into their treasury. They often purchase cleaning, kitchen and office supplies and donate to the Food Pantry. Our Men's Council also organizes and funds our annual lunches with the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus, and our annual Car Show. These are well attended and joyous occasions for the whole community.

### Events Team

Our Events Team coordinates and provides support to all group events at our church. They cooperate with our Men's Council, Deacons, and Fellowship Team to ensure their events are a success. They have also organized and coordinated our Annual Community Fair. The Fair has been an opportunity to welcome people from the community to join us for a day of fun. We invite them to play carnival games, ride ponies and meet local makers and artisans. And we share our

mission and invite them to worship with us. Everybody is welcome on the Events Team. The Events Team has a lot of energy and participation rates are high because everybody has a favorite event.

## Bible Study

Throughout the year (semi-monthly) we study scripture and discuss what it means to us, how it affects our lives and our decisions. We meet in small groups; either in-person or remotely by video conferencing. We may study a canonical book, a commentary or a book by a private author. The writing style might be poetry, persuasive, narrative or expository. We may even use creative arts like painting to provoke conversation. The content may be related to the festivals and seasons of the Christian year or not. We share our personal stories, spiritual journeys, best moments, worst moments and more. We exchange ideas and thoughts about the meaning of life and the importance of faith. We learn about church history and doctrine. We learn about each other; we relate and connect.

## Worship Team

Throughout the year we form teams of people who are committed to improving our worship experience during the seasons of Advent, Lent and Holy Week and for significant occasions like Christmas, Epiphany, Transfiguration, Easter, Pentecost, and All Saints Day. Teams use all manner of art to enhance worship and create a space for reverence and contemplation. Teams are dynamic and people participate when time allows them, and passion motivates them.

## Fellowship Team

During the seasons and for significant occasions the Fellowship Team works closely with the Worship Team to provide space for people to have a conversation about the message they received during worship. Teams decorate the space for the occasion and provide light refreshments. Teams create props and interactive exhibits to prompt conversations.

## Music Team

Our members desire music as an integral part of their worship. We hired a professional musician to serve (part-time) as our Minister of Music. Our Music Minister arranges sounds from our Vocalists and instruments (Pipe Organ, Piano, Keyboard and Guitar). Anybody who feels motivated can join our choir. Our musical tastes include traditional hymns accompanied by organ or piano and non-traditional, contemporary lyrics accompanied by guitar and keyboard.

## Production Team

Our Production Team is devoted to enhancing worship using digital media and technology. The Media Team collaborates closely with our Pastor and Music Minister to synchronize all elements of our service with our printed bulletin. They create slides with passages from scripture, verses

from hymns and lyrics from songs and project them to the big screen so we can seamlessly transition from one element to the next. They monitor our cameras, audio sources and connectivity while streaming the service; and they monitor/respond to our (on-line) viewers.

## Media Team

Our Media Team is committed to maintaining our Webpage (<https://www.presbyterianchurchjamesburg.org>) and Social Media Page (Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg, New Jersey on Facebook). They maintain our online presence; so, people can connect with us using computers, tablets and mobile devices. They protect and project our image by managing content that reflects our mission.

## Government:

The Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg was incorporated in 1854. We are governed by our Board of Elders and Deacons. Our elders also serve as Trustees of the corporation. Elders and Deacons are elected by the congregation at our annual meeting. The Nominating Committee presents candidates for Elders and Deacons, but all members are eligible to serve on either. We elect 12 Elders and 15 Deacons; each serves a three-year term.

## Session Committees

Our Session has been changing how it works. We used to have eight committees, now we have three. We reduced the eight committees, namely, Administration and Finance, Nominating, Membership and Outreach, Building and Grounds, Worship & Devotion, Christian Education, Stewardship, and Events to three, namely, Administration & Finance, Buildings & Grounds and Worship & Devotion. We thought that the business of these three committees was the most important, so we prioritized them. We also increased the frequency of our meetings from once a month to twice. We conducted business during each of those meetings, but we only introduced/voted on motions during our regularly scheduled Session meetings held the first week of the month. We informally named the additional meeting "The Committee of The Whole."

We do understand the importance of Christian Education, but presently we do not have the commitment and energy necessary to build that ministry. We pray that the Holy Spirit will call on us and we will make that commitment. In our Fellowship Hall there is a beautiful, stained-glass window that depicts Jesus welcoming young children with open arms. This window was put there in the 1930s when the (new) Sunday School wing was dedicated. We will pray for discernment and encouragement that we might re-build this ministry.

Our Administration and Finance Committee proposed exploring the possibility of leasing our Manse (Pastors Residence) on a temporary basis to generate income. After a substantial investment of time and money we are ready to lease the Manse to a non-profit affordable

housing corporation. We may be instrumental in helping those less fortunate because of circumstances beyond their control find refuge, stability, a new beginning. We are excited about this new direction; it will become more than a source of income. It is the beginning of a ministry?

## Deacon Committees

Our Deacons ministry consists of the following eleven committees: Communion, Calendar, Caring, Christmas Toys, Devotions, Flowers, Fundraising, Outreach, Ushering, and Food Pantry.

**COMMUNION:** Deacon's purchase and prepare the gift for anyone who wants to receive communion.

**CALENDAR:** Deacons mail out letters to companies and stores (businesses) to advertise in our Calendars along with parishioners to add birthdays, anniversaries etc. To our calendar.

**CARING:** Deacons visit nursing homes, also visit shut ins and other parishioners not able to get out.

**DEVOTIONS:** Deacons read a poem, a passage from the bible or from our devotional Booklets. Different Deacons are asked every month.

**FLOWERS:** Deacons deliver flower that have been purchased by the church, parishioners or Donations to the nursing homes, shut in (members), hospital Patients from our Church.

**FUNDRAISING:** Deacons have the calendar to help raise money, yard sales, candy sales and fairs.

**OUTREACH:** Deacons visit nursing homes and deliver blankets, Afghan's, gloves, socks and small Items which they might need which we buy or get as donations.

**USHERING:** Deacons greet and seat parishioners and give them a bulletin. If they are new to Our church we will give them a friend greeting gift bag, which has pens, pencils, crayons, date books, hand sanitizer, or many different things we collect during the year.

**CHRISTMAS TOYS:** Deacons collect, divide, wrap and give out to families with children that participate in our food cupboard.

# Welcome to Jamesburg:

Jamesburg is a borough in Middlesex County in Central New Jersey. As of 2020 the population was around 5,783. The area is a little under one square mile. The median age of the residents is 37.4 years. The racial composition of Jamesburg is 63.3% white, 25.1% Hispanic, 5.7% Asian and 10.4% Black. The median household income is \$93,000. The poverty rate is 6%. Living in Jamesburg offers residents a dense suburban feel and most residents own their homes. The Borough is the older and more urban core area located in the center of and surrounded by Monroe Township which is forty-three square miles.

## Location

The Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg is located at the corner of Gatzmer Avenue and Church Street. The key to Jamesburg's growth and success lies in an excellent location which is off the New Jersey Turnpike a mile to the west and routes 9 and 18 to the east. Jamesburg is a prime location for restaurants and businesses with New York City, Philadelphia and shore points which are easily accessible via our major roadways.

## Local Businesses and Jobs

There are many owner - operated businesses throughout the local neighborhoods of Jamesburg. There are restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations, home improvement stores, hardware stores, car wash, firehouse, library, real estate offices, consignment stores, post office, banks, hair salons, drug stores, and doctors' offices. In neighboring Monroe Township there are 14+ adult 55 and over communities as well as 6+ nursing/rehabilitation homes.

## Education

The Jamesburg Public Schools serve students in pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade. which comprises two schools. They have an enrollment of 664 students and 64.8 classroom teachers. Since 1980 Jamesburg High School students have attended Monroe Township High School in Monroe Township.

## Parks

Thompson Park, which is part of the Middlesex County Park System, is located on the southwestern edge of Jamesburg. Thompson Park is a total of 675 square acres; part of which

is in Monroe Township. There is a 30-acre Manalapan Lake to the eastern edge. The park has three entrances, one on Forsgate Drive in Jamesburg and two on Perrineville Road. The Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg has hosted Easter Sunrise services as well as other services at the Gazebo in Thompson Park.

## Public Transportation

Middlesex County Area Transit (MCAT) Shuttles provide service to and from Jamesburg on routes operating across Middlesex County. The M1 route operates between Jamesburg and the New Brunswick Train Station and the M2 route connects Jamesburg, Helmetta, and Spotswood with East Brunswick, including Brunswick Square Shopping Mall.

## Religious Denominations

There is one Presbyterian Church in Jamesburg. Other denominations present in the community are Baptist, Methodist, Catholic and others.

## Charity Organizations

The Presbyterian Church of Jamesburg has their Deacons Food Pantry. It is one of their most successful Outreach Programs that provides free food to approximately 125 families and individuals in our community.

## Congregational Survey:

In Winter of 2023, the Session contacted 67 members and requested their participation in a survey, officially known as the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT). Forty-Eight (48) surveys were returned; most of them (46) were from households. More members participated in the survey than attended (on average) Sunday Worship services. This exceptional response to the survey suggests that our (active) members are concerned about the future of our church.

Holy Cow Consulting provided us with a thorough report of findings from the CAT. They also recommended a Coach (from Crows Feet Consulting) who has had many years experience working with data from small congregations. We invited everyone who received the survey to convene for an interpretation of the data. At this convention in February 2023, our Coach presented a report titled Vital Signs (for the PCOJ) and everyone was given an opportunity to

comment and ask questions. There was a respectable response to our invitation; forty-three members attended, each of whom received a copy of Vital Signs.

Most of our members had never participated in anything like the CAT before, so they had to process a lot of information in a short amount of time. Our Coach was conscious of this so after providing some information about the development and use of the CAT, and sharing some personal testimony, we were given time to discuss the findings and express how that knowledge made us feel inside.

## Holy Cow Small Group Conversations

As a result of the Holy Cow Interpretation, there were several 'hot button' issues to be addressed with the congregation in small group settings. There were three different groups held on varying days and times to attract as many participants as possible. Each group had 8-10 participants each week.

## Empower Members for Ministry

People like being asked to participate in the worship service. Being a liturgist feels good to them and it motivates them to attend worship. Even people who are not in the service appreciate witnessing lay leaders contribute.

Before we called our Transitional Pastor, we relied on "weekly" pulpit supply. The ministerial style and message were constantly changing. Planning worship was difficult, but it forced us to accept change and think intentionally about our Worship Ministry.

Officers and Congregants had different perspectives. Officers believed that people have not been willing to help with ministry, and people believed their help was not needed.

## Need for Pastoral Care Is High

Several people shared the belief that our Pastor Emeritus was exceptionally caring; it was as if he had a sixth sense and showed up when needed. But one member recalled he was not available when her parents passed close together and she felt neglected. Her emotions deepened because she was not comfortable discussing her experience and sharing her feelings in the open.

The congregation should pay attention to those who are not present at Worship and events and contact them, offer care, pray with them, and reaffirm God's love for them. Someone shared their experience as an Elder in another congregation that delivered communion to shut-ins. There was a general sense that in our church the Deacons used to visit shut-ins in homes and in hospitals, but that is not currently happening. Someone replied that the Deacons have other responsibilities, including the Food Pantry, which alone is a big job.

Someone recalled there used to be a support group for young mothers that was very cathartic.

People like the use of Prayer Hearts; they write their concern on a blank heart and place it in a basket (with other concerns); at the same time, they retrieve a heart with someone else's concerns. Praying on those matters which concern someone else helps build connections, relationships, and compassion.

During Worship People miss the opportunity to exchange greetings during the passing of the peace; but they enjoy talking (with refreshments) during fellowship afterwards.

## Worship Must Be Excellent

Sound is an issue in the Sanctuary. We need better microphones, because we cannot hear the Pastor, choir or musician(s). People could have printed copies of the sermon. For those people who are learning English, the sermon could be emailed earlier.

Some people prefer to use multiple versions of the Bible in Worship.

It is nice when the sermon relates to the "real world" but is not political, and time is allowed for meditative (personal) prayer and communal prayer. Announcements during Sunday service detract from the Worship experience. Communion by intinction feels more spiritual than (airline cups) packaged elements.

Most people enjoy opportunities to plan/participate in Worship; and they enjoy (seasonal) extras like art. Everyone enjoys narrated scripture readings because they make the text come alive and they encourage participation. They also energize our worship experience and impress visitors.

## Music Must be Excellent

Everyone agrees it is difficult to sing when the melody of a hymn is unfamiliar. Some prefer hymns from the (old) Red Hymnal, some the (new) Purple Hymnal, and some like a mix of both.

Everyone agrees it is nice to hear both the organ and the piano; and they welcome the return of the choir. Everyone enjoyed Last year's Christmas Cantata, and they cannot wait for this year.

## The Same Small Group of People Make All Decisions

There was a general sense that the Session needs to communicate better with the congregation. People do not feel appreciated, they feel that the Session is not aware of their gifts and skills. The Deacons are better at inviting, welcoming, training and mentoring people to serve.



## About Us

Our members are older, most (53%) are over the age of 65. Of the rest (47%), most are between the ages of 35 and 64 (38%). Less than 10% of respondents were under 35. We will have more information about age-related inferences later.

Our theologies are diverse. Or put another way, we do not share the same theological perspectives. Some of us are theologically conservative minded, and some of us are theologically progressive minded. It might be that some of us are somewhere in between, but the data is inconclusive.

The descriptive indices that are used to evaluate our willingness to make changes suggest we are settled in our ways, but we might be willing to make changes in our worship to attract people.

## Our Priorities

Attracting (young) Families, Reaching (new) People, and Christian Education/Spiritual Formation were important to all respondents. Indeed, according to Holy Cow Consulting it would be unusual if these were not important. Of special importance to us were:

- ✓ Working to renew and revitalize the community around the church by building coalitions with partners.
- ✓ Developing the spiritual generosity of the people to financially support the ministry of the church.
- ✓ Strengthening the pastoral response of the church in serving people in times of need .
- ✓ Strengthening the management and support of persons in various ministries.
- ✓ Changing or improving the music of the church to deepen our worship experience.

We were less concerned with:

- ✓ Developing ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
- ✓ Creating opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships.
- ✓ Strengthening the process by which members are called and equipped for ministry and leadership.

## Age Related Inferences

Expanding outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society was of greater importance to young people (<10%). It might be that this age group is more sensitive to societal issues; in some way (though not homeless) they may even feel marginalized themselves.

Developing the spiritual generosity of the people to financially support the ministry of the church was of greater importance to people older than 35 (>90%). The corollary to this suggests that most people feel they are giving generously; so, it is someone else that needs to be more generous.

Strengthening the pastoral response of the church in serving people in times of need was of greater importance to people 65 and older. It might be that as they age, people associate the phrase “pastoral response” with age-related illnesses and transitioning from life to afterlife.

Strengthening the management and support of persons in various ministries so they can do what they do best in work that is meaningful and celebrated was less important to people 65 and older. We will have more on this subject later.

## Comments, Concerns, Take-Aways

It seems incongruous that we prioritized strengthening the management and support of persons in various ministries but not strengthening the process by which members are called and equipped for ministry and leadership. One explanation might be that we understand the importance of ministries, but we do not understand the process of calling and equipping. Many of us were humbled when our Transitional Pastor suggested that we Elders and Deacons would benefit from basic training. By training we mean reading, concentrating, deliberating and recalling what it means to be an Elder/Deacon. Following this period of introspection, it was possible to imagine how we might have become insensitive to the process of training and equipping since our ordinations. In the last several years especially there have been many (too many) issues that needed to be resolved and we unintentionally overlooked the importance of the process.

Though we may be in the recovery stage of church development, we have made significant improvements. We will rebuild. We can sense the power of the Holy Spirit. With the help of our Transitional Pastor, we invited someone special to share his testimony with us. He shared his story with us, and we got to know each other over the course of several days. His testimony was transformational, and he assured us that the Holy Spirit was at work in us. You might say that we were energized from that moment, and we have continued that momentum. Knowledge that the Holy Spirit is moving us and healing us has brought new energy into our church. Energy that will help us become more affective and make changes that will satisfy the needs of people, young, old and in between.

Changing or improving the music of the church to deepen our worship experience was one of the top priorities of our members. Since the survey we have made significant improvements to our music. We improved our communication, and we discovered differences in how members classify hymns/music. We have a playlist of favorite hymns/music and members can add requests to the playlist. The Pastor and Minister of Music select hymns/music from the list that add something to the worship experience and message for that week. The Production Team create slides to accompany the hymns/music.

We are a regenerative community of faithful followers of Christ. We are on a journey, which because of its importance is difficult, painful and may prompt us to ask questions for which there is no right or wrong answer. We are searching for a pastor who will journey with us and join in our mission to be a supportive and caring family of faith who shares the love of Christ and all of God's blessings with our local community and the world.