

## **Sub-Task Force Recommendation Summary**

### **Christian Formation—Children**

Recommendation to sell back of church. Make sure to give adequate notice to Day School families. Best if could remain in place this upcoming school year 2019-20 with clarity on what happens next and timing. Evaluate the use of other spaces such as Westminster, although some felt that parents like the “prestige” of coming to FPC for school.

### **Christian Formation—Youth**

While we are not eager to see any of the church property sold, we would be amenable to reviewing a proposal for the back portion of the property. As part of that, we would request the following information:

- 1) A rendering showing what our building would look like, including our new classrooms, parking, etc.
- 2) An explanation about how the church portion would interact with the privately owned portion.
- 3) A timeline and plan to minimize the impact of construction on church programming and the day school during the transition period.
- 4) Protection of the memorial garden.

As FPC members, we would also like to see a proposal for how the proceeds of any sale would be used to attract new members in all age groups. We suggest that ample funds be committed to recruiting new members and caring for both our children and our aging congregation.

### **Christian Formation—Adults**

Begin discussions with the Developer on the terms of Option 2 [Sell or lease the back half of the property]. At the same time, explore with the membership the viability of Option 1 [No property sale and self-fund]. If at anytime during the discussion and negotiations of Option 2, we find Option 1 viable, we can withdraw.

The last choice would be Option 3 [Sell all church property] which the committee believes would not help achieve the Adult Education goals because of the delay’s and distractions identified above.

### **Outreach**

Though we are not recommending one of the three specific alternatives, we believe that thoughtful and structured conversation and discernment should continue before the Session acts. In the next phase, we believe more congregants should be involved, perhaps through carefully facilitated focus groups.

### **Traditional Worship**

Our Committee is open to discussions with a developer to purchase a portion of our property and to ascertain how his plans will affect our programs. If a sale can be negotiated to the benefit of both parties, this would provide additional funds, when added to our present endowment funds, provide income that could be used to underwrite a major portion of our operating expenses and additional church programs. Our main concerns are: parking, Day School, office space, and compatibility with new neighbors.

(Continued...)

## Sub-Task Force Recommendation Summary

### Traditional Worship (cont'd)

If a partial property sale cannot be negotiated with a developer, we recommend that we stay in our present location and work to grow our membership. We have a sanctuary like no other and it would be impossible to duplicate it, even on a smaller scale, at another location. With so many new residents moving into our neighborhood, we may be able to attract new members.

To sell the Church property is an option of last resort and if we cannot reverse the decline of church membership, it may be the right thing to do. At the present time, we are under no pressure to make this decision. Our property will continue to increase in value. If the time comes when a sale is desirable, relocation decisions would be made prior to listing the property for sale.

### Contemporary Worship

**1. Stay at 701 Beach Drive and, with urgency and a fighting, committed spirit, kick-start the life of FPC.**

It is imperative that we make immediate changes (large and small, detailed below) to turn FPC into a vibrant, outwardly welcoming, kind and relational church that attracts new people. We must do this, as one member said, "with all our hearts, souls and minds." We owe this to God, to our members who have persevered, and to our legacy in our community. We must, as another member said, "permit the Spirit to revitalize our church community."

**2. Do not sell part of the property.**

In addition to taking long-overdue steps to SOC (save our church), our group stressed that preserving and promoting our 50-year first-rate asset, the FPC Day School, is paramount. New construction on the back half of our property would severely disrupt not only drop off and pick up but also potentially diminish the school in parents' eyes. The construction would also impact the two congregations that currently share our space.

**3.** If, after we see the results of our earnest and urgent efforts to grow the church are not making a significant difference, **put the entire property up for sale**, and look for a new property elsewhere, a smaller parcel that, it is hoped, would be downtown or near it. Our property, an entire city block, is valuable and, while any real estate transaction is subject to market variables, such an attractive property could be sold at any time.

**4.** We added a fourth option we thought deserves thorough discussion (but because of time constraints we focused on the first three priorities): **Rebuild a different facility on our current property to accommodate visible community outreach.**

## FPC Sub-task force - Christian Formation: Children

*Participants: Sally Baynard, Karen Kirsten, Lynn Kiehne, Carol Riley, Gay Wasik*

### Options Discussion:

#### **DO NOTHING**

##### **Pros**

- It's easy and familiar
- Comforting
- Keeps long-term members contented
- Reputation for music programs
- Identity as FPC
- Value will continue to increase for the property
- We are close to a number of major missions

##### **Cons**

- Cost of maintaining aging physical plant
- Logistics – community around is aging community, reaching out to those we want to serve don't live near the church
- Change
- Perceived as an older, wealthy, snobby church
- Membership continues to dwindle

##### **Interesting idea**

- Lease the sanctuary to Florida Orchestra

#### **SELLING PART**

##### **Pros**

- Instant cash
- Decrease maintenance costs
- Might bring new members (if condos, or if new structure is of interest to younger generations)
- Forces us to look at our property differently
- More parking??
- More large spaces to meet if conferencing space is part of the new structure

##### **Cons**

- Lose car parking for our fund raising weekend efforts
- Create more conflict with sharing church spaces
- The view – what would it look like
- How would the Day School look or operate?
- Living through the construction period – may lose people

##### **Interesting idea/concern?**

- Whom else would we talk to – Westminster possible site for Day School

## FPC Sub-task force - Christian Formation: Children

*Participants: Sally Baynard, Karen Kirsten, Lynn Kiehne, Carol Riley, Gay Wasik*

### **SELLING ALL**

#### **Pros**

- Fresh start, new beginning, can design what makes sense for who we see we are
- More appealing to younger families if locate in the right area, design the right welcoming structures – need to also consider programming
- Getting to roots of ministry, Jesus didn't do his work in a temple—went to the people

#### **Cons**

- Location, not known, not familiar
- Lose existing members
- Impact on organ?

#### **General observations:**

- Overall – thought provoking
- Risk taking mission

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### **Notes:**

- Don't want to negatively influence the youngest among us and their parents to leave
- Westminster – a possibility?
- We recognize we need to do something. We need to better engage with the Day School as they are an available population. Need for a young liaison who has the energy, interest, and can inspire the parents.
- How to be relevant?
  - Accommodation for the very young so parents can attend service.
  - Labyrinth in front of church as a gathering space; have musical events to encourage folks to stop by.
  - Create opportunities that appeal to parents and they will come.
  - Relevant family center; programs that address the needs of parents with young children.
- Reality of today: We really wouldn't displace any young children's programs offered on weekends as so children in our Sunday School efforts. Day School would have an impact, and again, whether better in a different location.
- WNL – consider outreach via use of the bus. With children you either rely on your parents or we need to get them.
- Schools will be understaffed due to teacher shortage, consider expansion to include K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

#2. Sell back of church. Make sure to give adequate notice to Day School families. Best if could remain in place this upcoming school year 2019-20 with clarity on what happens next and timing. Evaluate the use of other spaces such as Westminster, although some felt that parents like the "prestige" of coming to FPC for school.

## **FPC Sub-task force - Christian Formation: Youth**

*Attending members: Gene Oliver (chair), Kathy Bardin, Rhonda Holifield*

*Absent: David Aumack, Diane Zuercher*

The sub-task force met to discuss the future of the church's youth programs and how FPC's finances and facility could affect these plans, particularly if the church decides to follow up a developer's expression of interest in the back part of the property.

We agreed that the youth program has been on an upswing recently. However, over the long term we would like to see more time, talent, and treasure allocated to outreach to young people in our church and community, stability of youth leadership and programs, stronger bonds built among our church's age groups, and enriching education/activities for our youth. These things are needed for the growth and longevity of our church and the care of our children.

We understand that FPC has limited finances and many competing needs. While we are not eager to see any of the church property sold, we would be amenable to reviewing a proposal for the back portion of the property. As part of that, we would request the following information:

- 1) A rendering showing what our building would look like, including our new classrooms, parking, etc.
- 2) An explanation about how the church portion would interact with the privately owned portion.
- 3) A timeline and plan to minimize the impact of construction on church programming and the day school during the transition period.
- 4) Protection of the memorial garden.

As FPC members, we would also like to see a proposal for how the proceeds of any sale would be used to attract new members in all age groups. We suggest that ample funds be committed to recruiting new members and caring for both our children and our aging congregation.

## **FPC Sub-task force - Christian Formation: Adult**

*Sub-Task Force Members: Peter Pav, Marilyn Mulcahy, Rachael Bowron, Terry Schoenbert, Robin Lyle*

The Adult Education Sub-Task Force met three times: April 10, 13, and 16. Our charge was to:

1. Examine the current state of Adult Education at FPC
2. Review modes and subjects of education in Presbyterian and non-denominational churches with known large congregations
3. Make recommendations for changes to the approach of the Church to Adult Education
4. Discuss funding requirements to effectuate the findings
5. Prioritization of property deal by Adult Education requirements

### **(1) The current state of Adult Education at FPC**

Adult Education at FPC lags behind churches in the area and nationally who are experiencing growth, particularly in the Young Adult to Middle Aged Adult demographic. While existing programs are serving the needs of some our members, other members could be better served. Our programs include Sunday School classes, Small Groups, Men's morning Bible Studies, Women's Groups, PWC, and courses provided by outside providers, e.g., Women's BSF.

### **(2) Modes and subjects of education in Presbyterian and non-denominational churches**

The Sub-Task Force reviewed the websites for churches listed in the appendix. We found the following modes of education: Small Groups, Formal Curriculum, Guest Speakers, and some Sunday Schools, though the use of this form of community education appears to be in decline. We also observed an integration of mission outreach and education in local and international settings. Non-religious speakers and courses on lay ethics, ecology, human rights, civil liberties, public education, and poverty abatement are also used for education. There is also a focus on the arts, both visual and written.

### **(3) Recommendations for changes to the approach of the Church to Adult Education**

The appendix contains detailed observations from the Sub-Task Force. In sum, we need to recognize that in order for the church to survive, it must include an increasing number of members under the age of 50 with an emphasis on single young adults and families with children and youth. St. Petersburg's downtown is young, vibrant, with people enjoying the arts including Fine Arts, Native American art, Crafts, Ceramics, Painting, Glass, and Music both modern in all forms and classical. Social interaction occurs in restaurants and bars. Sports consumes a great deal of their attention, and music of all genres attracts. We must consider including aspects of this world in the life of our church. We must speak their language and share their passions, interests, loves, and troubles. To address these requirements, the Sub-Task Force finds that the Church needs professional help to define, create, and market to these people.

### **(4) Discuss funding requirements to effectuate the findings**

Funding of these changes in the form of professional staff, equipment, and facilities is essential. In recent years, the Church has tried to do this work with volunteers and experienced mixed results. The desire to attract young people to the Church is not enough. We must have expert help. Second Presbyterian of Memphis has a ministry staff of 32, 12 of whom appear to be ordained. First Presbyterian of Orlando has 30 with 8 ordained, Summit of Orlando has 7 pastors (not sure of ordination), 40 Coordinators and Directors of

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ministries. These are big churches and require big staffs, but the observation is that they most likely become this size by building themselves through key ministries like Adult Education with the help of professional staff.

The recommendation of the Sub-Task Force is that professional staff be hired with knowledge and experience to lead the church into new ministries of education. To attract such talent we will need Pastors, Directors, Coordinators and Administrators, all of which the churches reviewed have for the focused ministries. Experienced Pastors will cost from \$75,000 to \$120,000. Directors will range from \$55,000 to \$75,000. Coordinators from \$35,000 to \$65,000 and Administrators from \$35,000 to \$65,000. These must include benefits which are approximately 17% of gross salary. All of these must be full-time positions. For order of magnitude insight, at the high end of these estimates, a team of 1 Pastor, 1 Director, 2 Coordinators and 1 Administrator could cost \$390,000 while a team at the low end would cost \$235,000. If this mix of staff is chosen, the actual number is somewhere in between those two sums.

### **(5) Prioritization of property deal by Adult Education requirements**

The Sub -Task Force has been charged with considering the fulfillment of Adult Education goals requirements in light of three property disposition scenarios:

1. No property sale and self-fund
2. Sell or lease the back half of the property with the provision of a Life Center and parking to be owned by the Church
3. Sell all Church property and find another location.

Option 1 would only be tenable if members of the Church gave unrestricted donations sufficient to fund not only Adult Education, but also the other Sub-Task Force initiatives. Given the diminished Church membership and recent fundraising activities, this option ranks third in the most likely to achieve the recommendations and results.

Option 2 has the potential to raise funds within the next one to two years to begin the funding initiatives. It also provides new facilities that foster Adult Education goals. The risk of this Option include loss of property, loss of facility control, future maintenance costs in the form of increased fees from the Condominium Association, and limitations on parking that could inhibit growth.

Option 3 has the potential to provide the greatest funding in the shortest period of time. The risk of this Option, include membership loss, insufficient property to establish a new Church, loss of a Downtown presence due to cost, consumption of funds acquiring land and building new structures or buying existing property and improving facilities, loss of time, money, and focus due to building efforts, being "homeless" for a period of time, moving to a location due to economics that are not consistent with member growth focus due to change in demographics.

## FPC Sub-task force - Christian Formation: Adult

*Sub-Task Force Members: Peter Pav, Marilyn Mulcahy, Rachael Bowron, Terry Schoenbert, Robin Lyle*

### **The Sub-Task Force for Adult Education therefore makes the following prioritization:**

Begin discussions with the Developer on the terms of Option 2. At the same time, explore with the membership the viability of Option 1. If at anytime during the discussion and negotiations of Option 2, we find Option 1 viable, we can withdraw.

The last choice would be Option 3 which the committee believes would not help achieve the Adult Education goals because of the delay's and distractions identified above.

At this stage in the life of our church, we are a church that has spent millions of dollars in building a campus and funding ministries and is now in decline. The question now is not how much we have to spend, but rather how much can we afford not to invest for the Glory of our Risen Lord and the furtherance of the Kingdom.

## APPENDIX

### PETER PAV'S SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULT FORMATION

1. Traditional Sunday School is appropriate for very few folk, but not for most of our potential audience.
2. We should maintain some traditional SS, but in addition we should put topical programs in place. Some held on campus, some off.
3. Specific topics, not general, on topics of current interest, e.g.: impacts of current downtown development boom pushing out smaller, local things. Social and economic impact of the arts boom. Needs of the type of new residents who are coming.
4. We should team with e.g. Eckerd College, USFSP, SPC, Preserve the Burg, city task forces, Junior League, etc. Benefit from their expertise. They will increase visibility and participation. Programs should start with a keynote expert public event, followed by interest groups. Should involve fun, socializing, not just thinking and discussing. Maybe include physical activities like walking, exercising. Programs should be on-going, not just one brief shot.
5. Perhaps get \$\$\$ and other support from businesses, clubs, sponsors.
6. Invite folks not just to be consumer participants, but to help design and run programs of their choice. 1PC would function as an incubator and facilitator.
7. We need a staff person with proven experience at running such programs. Perhaps included in new Associate Pastor skill set, or perhaps in place of AP.
8. We probably need outside expert help to determine topics.
9. Needs to be branded. Our wonderful mission statement won't do the job. Something jazzier and action-packed. E.g.; Burning but not consumed? Church of the burning bush? The church that makes a difference?
10. Possible helper for contact with arts community might be Marshall Rousseau.
11. Contact point with Eckerd College could be Libby Shannon, college chaplain and our Executive Presbyter.

## **FPC Sub-task force - Christian Formation: Adult**

*Sub-Task Force Members: Peter Pav, Marilyn Mulcahy, Rachael Bowron, Terry Schoenbert, Robin Lyle*

12. Try to hook up with upcoming Arts & Crafts Movement museum on our old Leisure Manor site.
13. Could we be involved in possibly forming some umbrella organization of local art museums and galleries
14. Events at our church could include topical art displays as well as speakers and discussion/action groups.

### **RACHAEL BOWRON'S SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULT FORMATION**

1. Continue existing adult bible classes/study as long as they attract participants.
2. Enhance learning opportunities via a format used at Village Church PCUSA in Prairie Village, Kansas. This would probably be best enacted by hiring an additional ministry staff member educated in the latest modalities for adult education and curriculum. See sample print from their Village U for their church and community website.
3. Stream or invite on campus respected high profile Ministers such as Dr. David Jeremiah, Pastor Robert Morris of Gateway Church (whose church has seen growth to 39,000 since the year 2000) or other visible followers of Jesus Christ for talks or sermons. This would attract people from the area, not just our FPC members.
4. Advertise events through Christian radio stations (Moody for instance at 91.1fm) to the community not just within our church itself.
5. Explore using pop-up messages on Facebook to invite folks to our church services and events, i.e. like the new non-denominational churches are doing. One that did it for their Easter services is a new church named Local Church St. Pete and another named Radiant Church. Both are new and meeting in schools, one at a Mt. Vernon school and the other at Canterbury High.

### **MARILYN MULCAHY'S SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULT FORMATION**

1. Leave the current 4 classes and let them decide for themselves how they want to continue.
2. To attract more people to check us out and want to belong, initiate a TBD or quarterly lecture series, ongoing, on compelling subjects, whether current events or life issues, given by an expert who is an engaging speaker. We become a source of community information. If it isn't a great speaker, forget it.
3. Supporting Peter's idea, we reach out to Eckerd College to form a relationship with (1) their voluntary educational programs for adults (if only as a possible location for occasional lectures) and (2) a relationship with professors to set up interns for setting up/assisting in our new endeavors whether it is small groups, youth programs, music programs, expanding our technology efforts on getting our story out to the community, etc. Find out what type of spots the Communication Dept is looking for to see if we can take advantage of their students.
4. Develop "our story" to tell the community and continue to educate them about us. What is compelling about us that someone will want to check us out? What does our Mission Statement visually look like?
5. From reading about other semi-"successful" churches, they all have small groups. We probably need to revisit using the Small Group modality, but we need to invest in a paid expert who can get it up and continuing.

## **FPC Sub-task force - Christian Formation: Adult**

*Sub-Task Force Members: Peter Pav, Marilyn Mulcahy, Rachael Bowron, Terry Schoenbert, Robin Lyle*

### *MARILYN MULCAHY'S SUGGESTIONS FOR ADULT FORMATION (cont'd)*

6. We need to ask our church what changes they want to see.
7. What are members willing to pay for? Maybe a once a year commitment for 3-5 years? (To pay for expert help, advice, consultation).
8. We need to do further research about different ways small groups can function: topics, does each class have to have same topic, class makeup, etc.
9. WNL—Maybe run it for selected weeks each quarter with relevant topics. Food must be good (like now).
10. Eventually add a taped Adult Sunday School class for shut-ins and interested people.
11. Think of a adult class outside the church: in the park, restaurant, or someone's home.
12. Think of worship also outside the church. Maybe a quarterly service in the park or beach. Not in place of the 11 am service but just as a special event. Maybe a picnic afterwards and we supply drinks and chips. Everyone brings their own blanket. I think this is a good idea for the 9 am service but doesn't have to be on a Sunday.

### WEBSITES REVIEWED BY THE SUB-TASK FORCE

- The Village Church, Prairie Village, KS (PCUSA)
- University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, NC (PCUSA)
- Covenant Presbyterian Church, Austin, TX (PCUSA)
- First Presbyterian Church, Conroe, TX (PCUSA)
- Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, GA (PCUSA)
- Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, TN (EPC)
- Orlando Presbyterian Church, Orlando, FL (EPC)
- Summit Church, Orlando, FL (Non-Denominational)
- Crosspointe Church, Nashville, TN (Non-Denominational)
- Gateway Church, Dallas, TX (Non-Denominational)
- Marble Collegiate Church, New York City, NY (Dutch Reformed)

## FPC Sub-task force - Outreach

*Participants: Beth Houghton, Chair, Deirdre Flora , Sam Higman, Uneeda Brewer, Dick Averitt*

**Our overarching conclusions were:**

- A. No matter the choice, we are entering a time when we will not be comfortable.**
- B. If we stay, we must significantly and boldly change the way we do things.**
- C. We are concerned that the living church congregation provides no or nearly no support to benevolences or work in the larger community (rather these funds come from endowments).**

A summary of our discussion follows:

Does Outreach mean:

- Evangelizing – Spreading the word of Christ, bringing people into a faith community OR
- Service – inspired by the love of Christ serving those in our community and beyond; showing God’s love in tangible ways

OR does Outreach mean both?

While our group did not come to a consensus re: which of the three alternatives we believe to be wisest for our congregation, we will list below many of our thoughts and considerations:

- A. No matter the choice, we are entering a time where we will not be comfortable.
- B. If we stay, we must significantly and boldly change the way we do things.

To reach out into the community; we cannot just let people come to us.

Examples might include:

- Lunch events in the community with Bible study/inspirational messages
- Outdoor events (on the roof of the building that might be built on our east side?)
- Advertising through appropriate media to our target demographic

Expanding our community by re-energizing our relationship with Trinity Presbyterian

- Visible community involvement by our Pastor

We cannot be all things to all people.

Both our church and primary market area demographics point to focus on:

- Young families with children
- Those over 65 years of age

- C. We are concerned that the living church congregation provides no or nearly no support to benevolences or work in the larger community (rather these funds come from endowments)

- One significant “plus” of selling all or part of our property might be to right-size our building costs to the size of our congregation, so that the donations of our living congregation could also support benevolences;

- Additionally, some of the proceeds from the sale might be used either to endow future support of building or benevolence

D. Our current building is:

- Sacred space, awe-inspiring, has great organ and is an amazing space for music
- Not inviting to many
- Expensive
- Not child or handicap friendly
- Located within the geography of our primary market & demographic

## **FPC Sub-task force - Outreach**

*Participants: Beth Houghton, Chair, Deirdre Flora , Sam Higman, Uneeda Brewer, Dick Averitt*

E. A new building could:

- Provide better functional support for children and for those with mobility issues
- Be more welcoming to the “outsider”
- Be more cost-effective

**Though we are not recommending one of the three specific alternatives, we believe that thoughtful and structured conversation and discernment should continue before the Session acts. In the next phase, we believe more congregants should be involved, perhaps through carefully facilitated focus groups.**

## FPC Sub-task force - Traditional Worship

*Members: Matt Clear, Malcolm King, Jane Egbert, Paul Culley, Margie Richmond, Mary-Linda Armacost, and Al May*

### Recommendation:

Acknowledging the trend that Church attendance is declining and the demographics of our younger population indicate that this trend will continue, our Committee is open to discussions with a developer to purchase a portion of our property and to ascertain how his plans will affect our programs. If a sale can be negotiated to the benefit of both parties, this would provide additional funds, when added to our present endowment funds, provide income that could be used to underwrite a major portion of our operating expenses and additional church programs. Our main concerns are: parking, Day School, office space, and compatibility with new neighbors.

If a partial property sale cannot be negotiated with a developer, we recommend that we stay in our present location and work to grow our membership. We have a sanctuary like no other and it would be impossible to duplicate it, even on a smaller scale, at another location. With so many new residents moving into our neighborhood, we may be able to attract new members.

To sell the Church property is an option of last resort and if we cannot reverse the decline of church membership, it may be the right thing to do. At the present time, we are under no pressure to make this decision. Our property will continue to increase in value. If the time comes when a sale is desirable, relocation decisions would be made prior to listing the property for sale.

### Vision:

In order to enhance the Traditional Worship Service, the Committee suggests the following ideas:

- More social engagement with members and guests, such as coffee before the service
- Asking younger lay leaders to participate in the service
- Add additional staff to relate to younger families
- Use more contemporary music in the service
- Offer more contemporary concerts to the public
- Employ a consultant on Church Sustainability

Attached is an expanded version of our Vision Recommendations. Many of these recommendations could be implemented now rather than waiting for a decision about the church property.

### Visions that Inspired and Support the Above Recommendations

#### **1. To encourage and sustain better attendance:**

- A. Develop a more vigorous effort to identify possible new members and to welcome visitors
- B. In conjunction with the ME&C Committee, initiate a Focus on Friendship program that will capitalize on common interests of small groups within the congregation, much like Six-to-Mix, Yoga and Meditation classes, and Bunco Game Nights
- C. Develop programs aimed at integrating and engaging new members and Snow Bird regular attendees

## **FPC Sub-task force - Traditional Worship**

*Members: Matt Clear, Malcolm King, Jane Egbert, Paul Culley, Margie Richmond, Mary-Linda Armacost, and Al May*

- D. Arrange for more opportunities for social engagement on Sunday mornings before or after service
- E. Identify and thank volunteers for even the smallest tasks in the bulletin when appropriate, but certainly in First News

### **2. To capitalize on the building's wonderful acoustics and strong existing music program:**

- A. Develop a robust plan to recruit more choir members
- B. Encourage continued involvement of high school musicians
- C. Offer a variety of music genres by occasionally integrating more contemporary music as well as featuring old-fashioned hymns
- D. Sponsor more concerts and musical events for the community, not necessarily religious

### **3. To enhance weekly worship:**

- A. Vary lay readers by gender and age.
- B. Invite members of congregation and community to speak briefly about a mission/need/passion
- C. Invite members - parents, grandparents, retired educators, etc. - to present short Children's Sermons based on sermon text developed in conjunction with Pastor Dawn
- D. Fund a Preaching/Speaking Series, spread over the year, that features 4-6 well-known ministers or well-regarded experts on ethics and other appropriate topics
- E. Consider ways to address "real world" problems and contemporary events in non-controversial ways

### **4. To attract younger families to traditional worship:**

- A. Add staff with this as a specific purpose
- B. Be more deliberate about availability of child care and Godly play options
- C. Encourage the use of the Sanctuary for baptisms

### **5. To learn and gain more ideas:**

- A. Take advantage of resources available from Presbyterian Church USA
- B. Employ a consultant on church growth and sustainability
- C. Consult with churches - Presbyterian and otherwise - who are indeed growing in numbers and programs.

## FPC Sub-task force - Contemporary Worship

*Participants: Michelle Carothers, Mollie Holden (ruling elder), Gretchen Letterman (moderator), Carlen Maddux (ruling elder), Jennie McCoun, Pat Shiflett, Jonathan Rine (FPC contemporary worship leader)*

*It is with great honor that we have served in prayer, love and respect for each other the past two weeks, and will continue to serve, to seek God's divine direction for the future of First Presbyterian Church St. Petersburg.*

**Report narrative**, including a Call to Action list of changes to act upon (some immediately) and valuable discussion points posed by task force members.

### Attachments

Comparative PCUSA church research

- Covenant Presbyterian Church, Austin TX
- First Presbyterian Church, Conroe TX
- University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill NC
- Village Church, Prairie Village KS

Others investigated (no report attached): First Presbyterian Church, Orlando (EPC) and McLean Presbyterian Church, McLean VA (PCA)

Two *Washington Post* stories about Arlington (VA) Presbyterian Church's decision to sell its property to a developer who built affordable housing there.

### Other resources of note:

[www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/FL/St-Petersburg.html](http://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/FL/St-Petersburg.html) (St. Pete demographics)

[www.springhousemn.org](http://www.springhousemn.org) Website of SpringHouse Ministry Center in Minnesota, the result of three congregations joining forces to provide vibrant worship center and combined ministries.

From a website that trends conservative and non-denominational, but contains useful insight about attracting millennials:

<https://faithit.com/10-things-wont-find-church-attract-millennials-frank-powell/>

<https://faithit.com/12-reasons-millennials-over-church-sam-eaton/>

## Contemporary Worship Report Narrative

The Contemporary Worship sub-task force began its work by seeking guidance from Scripture, and by asking for our hearts to be touched by God's insight, not human, as we worked to discern God's will for the future of First Presbyterian Church.

Although our task was to make recommendations from the framework of contemporary worship, we immediately and strongly agreed that there are critical issues that affect not just contemporary worship but the very survival of FPC.

Contemporary worship can happen anywhere. ("All you need for contemporary worship," said former FPC associate pastor Jay Warthen, "is to turn down the lights." This made us smile.) Our discourse, research and prayer over the past two weeks about the church's future, as well as input from the congregation from two

## FPC Sub-task force - Contemporary Worship

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surveys, indeed included many constructive ideas for bolstering the vitality of our contemporary worship. A Call to Action list follows, items of which will benefit contemporary worship as well as impact our overall growth.

First, our group's ranked priorities based on the options presented:

**1. Stay at 701 Beach Drive and, with urgency and a fighting, committed spirit, kick-start the life of FPC.**

It is imperative that we make immediate changes (large and small, detailed below) to turn FPC into a vibrant, outwardly welcoming, kind and relational church that attracts new people. We must do this, as one member said, "with all our hearts, souls and minds." We owe this to God, to our members who have persevered, and to our legacy in our community. We must, as another member said, "permit the Spirit to revitalize our church community."

**2. Do not sell part of the property.**

In addition to taking long-overdue steps to SOC (save our church), our group stressed that preserving and promoting our 50-year first-rate asset, the FPC Day School, is paramount. New construction on the back half of our property would severely disrupt not only drop off and pick up but also potentially diminish the school in parents' eyes. The construction would also impact the two congregations that currently share our space.

**3.** If, after we see the results of our earnest and urgent efforts to grow the church are not making a significant difference, **put the entire property up for sale**, and look for a new property elsewhere, a smaller parcel that, it is hoped, would be downtown or near it. Our property, an entire city block, is valuable and, while any real estate transaction is subject to market variables, such an attractive property could be sold at any time.

**4.** We added a fourth option we thought deserves thorough discussion (but because of time constraints we focused on the first three priorities): **Rebuild a different facility on our current property to accommodate visible community outreach.**

### How we did our work

Our group prayed, together and individually, met twice for thoughtful and Scripture-guided discussion, emailed voluminously, did online research and reached out to churches around the country with successful growth. **Please see attached reports on those churches.**

### Calls to action

1. **Undertake a serious study of our strengths and weaknesses** with a commitment to developing a practical plan by which we can move forward and strengthen our community. **Hire the best Presbyterian Church USA revitalization experts we can**, such as those who attended the recent conference at Princeton Theological Seminary, or Congregational Consulting Group (former staff of the renowned Alban Institute.) We need expert help in not only developing a strong vision and plan but also in executing it, along with a task force of committed members to see this through.

## FPC Sub-task force - Contemporary Worship

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2. Even as such a review/consultant work takes place, **we must move quickly to try different approaches that can be done relatively easily - radical and simple changes** - such as:
  - Promote Contemporary worship service: Have band play at more events, like Eggstravaganza, Fourth of July, Trunk or Treat, other community events. Make sure church photography on website and social media features more images of that service. Feature write-ups about band members, such as drummer Burt Rushing's run with *Mamma Mia!*, American Stage in the Park's hit musical, or drummer Melanie Downs' own band.
  - Session approval of one service during summer, start time 10 a.m.
  - Revive coffee hour between services in place of interrupting worship with passing the peace.
  - Try occasional contemporary service on a Saturday @ 5:30 p.m., then go out for pizza after.
  - Stream our services (contemporary AND traditional) like First Presbyterian Orlando contemporary service 9:45 AM on Sundays.
  - Plan combined services 4-5 time a year.
  - Hire people who will pose as possible new members and have them rate us on their perception of what we do and how well. What would a newcomer candidly have to say about us?
  - Consistently mention during announcements and preaching that all members of the congregation should invite others to worship.
  - Make FPC a Great Experience on premise. This includes establishing larger greeting teams to lead the way both before and after services, and increasing congregational participation in this "kindliness and friendliness campaign," not just greeting those we know and see each week.
  - Make FPC a Great Experience via digital platforms. Continue to improve social media and website presence.
3. SIGNAGE! Something electronic in front and back, that will allow us to communicate all that is going on here, as well as more prominent, eye-catching directional signage. Billboards in a tourist city work (see Mollie's report from FPC in Conroe, Texas).
4. Continue to research and learn from other successful churches: the ones on our list as well as local churches including First Baptist and First United Methodist. Appoint focus group for this.
5. Revitalize Sunday School. Why do the three or four remaining long-standing adult Sunday school classes continue to exist? Let's clone them. Decades ago there was a worldwide literacy effort with the motto "Each one teach one!" And this propelled literacy forward with alacrity.

First Baptist St Pete has approximately 20 adult Sunday School classes that meet on either Sunday morning or during the week, at homes, offices or elsewhere. Members also meet at the same time on the same day to do volunteer work at nonprofits in our community. (History reminder: FBC left its historic downtown location in 1990 for a new church on Gandy. This move wasn't due to lack of vitality or members, but to gain more parking space, and additional building opportunities.) Another downtown St. Pete church with extensive Sunday School offerings in First Methodist.

## FPC Sub-task force - Contemporary Worship

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6. Explore combining forces with other congregations, further than just the shared use agreements we already have with two churches. Check out the website of SpringHouse Ministry Center of Minneapolis, [www.springhousemn.org](http://www.springhousemn.org), which defines its combined ministries as: social justice, adult faith formation, children and youth, green (eco) team, their library, their kitchen and meals program, Bible study, women's ministry.
7. Create regular intergenerational opportunities such as University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill. (See attached report from Carlen.)
8. Continue to focus on the opportunities presented to gain younger members through our first-rate Day School. Invite parents to stay for worship after their children sing on Sundays. Form group to regularly reach out into our community to younger people, with creative efforts that fit the schedules of busy families.

### **Edited versions of input from task force members**

These expressions are valuable and worthy of a greater audience on this journey.

#### **From Pat Shiflett:**

I'd like to offer a few brief psychological perspectives:

- **Change is inherent, but not always in the desired direction.** Without immense effort, the principle of entropy applies, i.e., gradual decline into disorder. A principle in developmental psychology is that the passing of time doesn't change anything, except age. It is what we DO as time passes that is the critical ingredient. Our actions are rarely neutral. We must deliberately act, or we will continue to ebb but not flow.
- **ALL actions result from thought.** (In the beginning was the WORD). Since humans are created by God as meaning makers we are constantly giving meaning to things and events. If we exist in a kind of cognitive vacuum, a closed state of mind known as autistic logic, this doesn't enhance our decisions. Optimally, when we are open minded we seek multiple opinions, both those that support and those that disconfirm our mindset and beliefs, thus we make better decisions. Not perfect, but better. We must deliberate and remain open, facing realities and various views, in order to make the best decisions. In psychotherapy the first initiative is to find and define the problems honestly, through heartfelt discussion and effort. Only then can actual treatment efforts begin. Diagnose, then treat.
- **Our nature is to seek to be in genuine relationship with others and with God,** which is an enormous stimulus to personal growth and our capacity to serve. Stimulate positive relationships, based on integrity, and we stimulate growth and service. I have found the concept of relatedness stated by German theologian Martin Buber to be of much help in understanding relationships: The ideal, based on God's relationship with us, is I-Thou, that is, valuing others in a real and personal way as "thou." The opposite is I-It, seeing others as merely objects (it) to our ends, and not as real people, thus relationships are based on deceit and manipulation. We must take to heart the Golden Rule, and value each other, our fellow members, and our neighbors as God values us. We must get to know each other at a much deeper level. Let's work, play, study, dine, travel together.

## FPC Sub-task force - Contemporary Worship

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### **From Pat Shiflett (cont'd):**

- **For some time I've had the perception that our beloved church is depressed**, much as a person may be depressed. We've had many losses for many years, and have grieved over many friends who've left us and many possibilities that we've lost. This depression is a type of unresolved grief. Thus we have withdrawn, and been stymied and rebuffed again and again. There are obviously various treatments for this. However, one action is to "increase our commerce with, and in, the world." In its essence, this views our stability and health as a type of personal economy, and the more we withdraw from real steps to improvement, including withdrawing from the outside world, the less we improve. We must REALLY get out there in both our neighborhoods and our city, and engage as much as we possibly can. And we must engage with each other. OFTEN.

### **From Michelle Carothers:**

It is essential that we take action on the results of this visioning. Too many times before, we have collected information but have done nothing with it. The inquiry by the developer serves as a catalyst, this time, for us to do what we've known needs to be done. Whatever action is taken, we must give the utmost consideration to the responsibility and liability that comes with operating the Day School.

Kick-starting the process doesn't need to be complicated or controversial. Some simple changes, such as new signage (something electronic that will allow us to communicate all that is going on, here), a better social media presence and more targeted advertising, can be the impetus for the initial stages of change. I pass a Lutheran church on a regular basis. During Holy Week, they've had purple flags all around the property (nothing fancy, the kind you would see for an open house for new construction homes). They look so festive and inviting. That is something very inexpensive, yet effective, that could be done, immediately.

With regard to contemporary worship, the issue holding us back is not that the service takes place in the "basement." We don't have basements in Florida. The space is the Fellowship Hall, which recently underwent a \$1mm+ renovation. It is a nice space and, with a little work, can become even nicer for the worship experience. The issue is our own egocentrism. We need to let others know that this wonderful service exists. We've kept it to ourselves for too long. As Jonathan noted, we don't promote it. We barely even acknowledge it, outside our own congregation. The band needs to be playing at events like Eggstravaganza and Trunk-or-Treat - those places where younger families are present and can develop an interest in attending a service they probably don't even know exists. Our photographer and social media managers need to be told to prominently feature the band and other elements of the contemporary service, along with the traditional services.

### **From Mollie Holden**

Who are we going to serve and how? The fact is that our average member is elderly. Can we change this? Maybe. Maybe not. Our average church members' average age is 74. St. Pete's citywide average age is 42.6 while the average age in the U.S. is 39.4. This means that even though our city is getting younger, its population is still older than the national average. Additionally, the vast majority don't have kids.

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### **From Mollie Holden (cont'd):**

We've been framing our contemporary worship discussion around families for so long, but perhaps we should be framing it around empty-nesters or younger retirees who still have the energy and ability to also help with programing in addition to attending worship. What do they want out of worship? And for the younger generation, are they turned off by the word or idea of "worship"? Do they connect more to the idea of devotions, connection and mindfulness with God? All of these are worship, but with a different delivery. Are we trying to format our contemporary service off of the traditional one when maybe they should look completely different?

I'm really struggling to try to separate the visioning process of the contemporary service from physical/property side of this discussion. I feel I have more questions than answers. I believe this is mostly due to the quick turnaround time. The urgency pulls me to focus on the physical elements of worship rather than the worship itself. I find myself thinking about drums and lighting rather than how we can form better connections to God and others. I find myself trying to figure out what elements of worship we could do better so that people will enjoy the contemporary service more rather than focusing on how we can glorify God with more intention. I need more time. We need more time. We need to explicitly and in simple messaging tell the congregation that THEY have more time.

If we do not increase revenue quickly, we will be crushed under the weight of our aging facility and continue to depend on the "dollars of dead donors" to keep us afloat. I think this might look like selling the back portion of the property, or perhaps renting more of our unused or underused space as offices for small companies or non-profits. I believe if we sell the whole thing and move we will lose many of our Westminster attendees.

While I attend contemporary worship, my preference is for traditional worship. It's what I grew up with and just feels familiar. As a way to bridge the contemporary/traditional gap, I would even love to see less in our contemporary service rather than more, perhaps a more acoustic style service would feel more intimate without letting go of our casual nature.

I believe my generation craves community. We try to achieve this through social media, but this isn't a real community. I crave more fellowship. I want to support and be supported by others of this community. I want to hear a campaign of inviting people to church. To personally reach out to the people we know and invite them in the doors. These personal invites are so important. We keep hoping people will walk through the doors and fall in love with us, but we must make ourselves vulnerable and risk rejection by asking people to join us at church. How do we ask the people in our lives to join us for worship and fellowship? I also acknowledge that I feel so stretched thin that it's difficult to think about being more vulnerable or ask someone how I can support them because I don't have the capacity often, but I don't think we can grow without being willing to personally ask people to join us.

### **From Jennie McCoun:**

The only thing I'm clear about is the need to be open to radically change up some of our present practices and do it in a reasonable time frame. Let's narrow down 3-5 suggestions for improvement that we may be

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### ***From Jennie McCoun (cont'd):***

able to implement quickly, to simply try at a small cost. Establish a trial time period, i.e., six months. (See list of action items above.) We need to work on showing we are kind and grateful, loving to all, inclusive of all, welcoming.

What is our vision? This is where I think knowing the developer and their plans would be helpful. Maybe the church vision is to build affordable housing or housing for seniors (expanding the Westminster graduated assistant living capacity next door, for example)? I see that being more in line with a vision of our church's outreach than a high-rise condo. Read the articles regarding the Arlington Church. We know the property is valuable.

### **From Carlen Maddux:**

As we seek to move forward, we should be focused on two primary goals: 1) How do we re-energize our community in its present state? 2) How do we attract and sustain singles and families in the 25-55 age group? I think the intergenerational approach shared with us by University Presbyterian in Chapel Hill (see attached) bears looking at closely. Also, once we're confident in our plan as it's unfolding, we should begin a focused marketing campaign — billboards, mass emails, social media, whatever — as Mollie's contact suggests (see attached).

### **From Jonathan Rine:**

As disciples we are called to follow Jesus, molding our lives to the path Jesus has set before us, through mercy and grace, and with love as our compass. As I discern God's future for First Presbyterian Church, I ask myself what initially called me to apply for the opportunity to serve God's people of First Presbyterian Church. With this in mind, here are my thoughts:

Given the location of FPC, selling the property (in part or whole) will always be an option. However, in doing so we would lose the identity of being a benchmark in a growing downtown St. Pete and likely the identity of FPC as the church of this beautifully designed structure.

Selling should be a last option. Doing so, FPC abandons a community it has long served; potentially displacing longtime members who look for new church homes. FPC has an opportunity to grow, but changes must be made in order to do so. (See action items above.)

FPC cannot be mediocre. We cannot serve only those who currently attend regularly; we must strive to serve those who may wander through the door. What was right once, may not be right moving forward.

All this said, Church is not a building; it is a community of people gathered together to join in worship. Worship can happen anywhere. Where FPC chooses to provide a place of worship is the bigger question, along with what is lost and what is gained in that decision. Is it in unison with FPC's Mission and Vision; or is the decision itself the first step towards radical change?

From Pat Shiflett  
April 17, 2019

## COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (CPC), AUSTIN, TEXAS

[www.covenant.org](http://www.covenant.org)

Covenant Presbyterian Church was founded in 1960 and has four Sunday worship services, with three held in the Sanctuary: 8:15 a.m. Communion Service, and 9:30 and 11:00 Traditional Worship Services. The fourth service is a Contemporary Worship Service held in the Fellowship Hall at 11:05 a.m., concurrent with the traditional service in the sanctuary. The campus has four buildings interspersed with various parking lots and play grounds on what appears to be a fairly large site.

The church has 7 adult Sunday school classes on Sunday morning and 11 weekday classes and groups. In addition, there are regularly scheduled child and youth Sunday school and weekday classes. There are 8 choirs of different types including Sanctuary and youth choirs, a folk group, chamber group, and handbells, etc. The church also has a weekday preschool program. They have a program for adults called "Institute for Missional Formation" which requires a regularly scheduled and lengthy commitment by those enrolled. The church offers Summer Vacation Bible School annually and also offers summer sports camps. CPC has four pastors and numerous other staff assigned to various programs of the church. Their website is marvelous, and they have a blog as well as presence on FB and Instagram.

I have had email contact with CPC's Pastor, Thomas Daniel who was a speaker at a Presbyterian Church revitalization conference at Princeton Theological Seminary at the time. I have scheduled a telephone appointment with him for May 1.

Comparisons between CPC and our church:

- **Population.** Austin's population is 916,906 which is almost 4 times the size of St. Petersburg, which has a population of 256,000.
- **Income Level.** Austin has a median household income of \$56,993 whereas SP is \$71,000. Austin has a poverty rate of 15% (not aware of St Pete %). Only 27% of white children attend public school in the church's zip code though the population of the zip is 71% white. 65% of the public school children receive free breakfast and lunch.
- **Median Age.** 32.7 years is the median age in Austin whereas St. Pete's is 42.6.
- **Religious Affiliation.** 52.4% of residents in Austin acknowledge religious affiliation, compared to 35.9% in St Pete. 0.6% of Austin residents declare their affiliation to be Presbyterian whereas in St Pete that number is 1.2%.
- **Church Membership.** CPC church membership as of 2017 is 1598, down from 2013 membership of 1801. FPC membership in 2017 was 506, down from 736 in 2013.
- **Average Weekly Attendance.** CPC did not report attendance during the span of time in the PCUSA trends data. FPC attendance was 274 in 2017 relative to 340 in 2013.
- **Church Budget.** CPC's 2017 budget is \$3,433,993 relative to FPC @ \$905,700.
- **Membership Age Distribution.** With the age group 25-early 50s being more likely to have children from preschool through high school, that age group at CPC comprises 43.8% of its total membership of 1598 in 2017. At FPC that age group is 22% of 506 members in 2017. At CPC members over age 55 comprise 43.6% of members whereas at FPC, that number is 74%.

From Mollie Holden

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Conroe, Texas - [www.fpcconroe.org](http://www.fpcconroe.org)**

I was able to speak with Reverend David Green at First Presbyterian in Conroe, TX and he was extremely helpful. They are not currently doing a contemporary worship service, only traditional. In the past they had a contemporary service, but it did not survive a departure of a former pastor. After his departure they tried to combine services but some members of the congregation would see the drum kit and bass and simply walk out.

In a past church in Galveston Beach, they were successful in blending a service after hurricane Ivan. Before the hurricane they had separate contemporary and traditional services, but much like our congregation, they did not mingle much. After Ivan hit, the two services did combine, but it was as if it took a hurricane to bring them together. After a while the proponents of the traditional service came around and their love seeing the kids participate so much in the services outweighed their dislike for the contemporary elements.

Another thing that worked for them was a big advertising campaign. Because it was a tourist town, they took advantage of their real estate and had a billboard down the road. This advertising was eliminated due to expenses and attendance and membership both dropped. Dr. Green believes these were strongly related and encouraged us to take advantage of the fact that we are a tourist town and to do significant advertising.

He also described his current church as an “eatin’ church.” This means that people come for the food and fellowship just as much as they come for worship. He’s struggled to get the committee structure of older members to let on members of the younger generation, which is hurting membership and younger families are leaving. The older members are struggling under the weight of their responsibilities but are having a hard time accepting younger members into the fold. He says he often has to go around his committees to get things done that are outside of the “well, we’ve always done it this way” events and outreach.

First Pres Conroe is currently discussing developing some of their own land for commercial use. The former pastor left the church just a few weeks after construction of their new building was completed and “before the first mortgage” was due, so they are struggling with paying some debt and believe they can take advantage of the growth of their community and sell off some land.

He was careful to point out that as we continue our discussions to remember that a research study that’s about 7 years old from the Burnham Group says 35% of people under 35 years old have never been to a house of worship and that to get them in the door we must advertise. Additionally, it is essential to intentionally develop leadership within the church and to pray for the church to build people and not for people to build the church. He believes the worship style is ancillary and not nearly as important as the community you build. He warned that it is easy to make a pastor a scape goat, that we should trust our pastor’s leadership and bring in outside help so that they can be the scape goat so that we protect our pastor.

As I think about that last piece of advice, I would point out that many people in our congregation, including some in leadership, may not fully understand our polity. They don’t realize that our pastor is not a ruling elder and that the pastor is a teaching elder. Major decisions at our church are not made by the pastor, but by our ruling elders who carefully discern God’s will and desires for our church. It’s so important that we educate our members about this.

I did briefly share with Dr. Green the catalyst that led me to contact him. He enthusiastically supported a mixed-use space as “an awesome opportunity” and encouraged us to take advantage of it.

From Carlen Maddux  
April 17, 2019

**University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, NC**  
<https://upcch.org/>

Chapel Hill obviously is a university town. University Presbyterian Church (UPC) faces on to the main drag through town, Franklin Street. UPC looks across the street onto the front lawn of the UNC campus. (Coincidental side note: Our daughter Rachel worshipped at UPC and was involved with their campus ministry when she attended UNC 20 years ago. She speaks fondly of her time there.)

I talked with UPC's Rev. Kate Fiedler, the associate pastor of adult ministries, and with Kim McNeill, staff associate for youth ministries. Kate has been on staff for five years, and Kim for twelve. The senior pastor is an interim.

Before sharing these conversations, here are some quick comparisons between Chapel Hill and St. Petersburg and between UPC and our FPC:

- **Population.** *Chapel Hill's* population is 59,000, or about one-fourth that of St. Petersburg. While *St. Pete's* total population is 256,000, FPC probably draws from a population of one-third to one-half that.
- **Income Level.** *Chapel Hill* is wealthier with an average household income of \$117,600 vs. *St. Pete's* \$71,000 (\$67,000 vs. \$51,000 median income).
- **Median Age.** *Chapel Hill's* median age is 26.4 (not counting student population); *St. Pete's* 42.6 years.
- **Religious Affiliation.** *Residents in Chapel Hill's* county who acknowledge a religious affiliation is 45-55%. *Pinellas County residents'* share is 35-45%.
- **Church Membership.** *UPC's* membership as of 2017 is 1,295, down slightly from 1,338 in 2013. *FPC's* membership in 2017 is 506, down from 736 in 2013.
- **Average Weekly Attendance.** *UPC's* attendance in 2017 is 575 vs. 570 in 2013. *FPC's* attendance is 274 in 2017 vs. 340 in 2013.
- **Church Budget.** *UPC's* 2017 budget is \$2,013,000; *FPC's* is \$905,700.
- **Membership Age Distribution.** Members age 25--early 50s are likely to have children pre-school through high school. *At UPC*, that age group comprises 35% of its total membership of 1,295, or 448 persons. *At FPC*, that age group is 22% of 506 members, or 113. *At UPC*, those over age 55--49% (635); *at FPC*--74% (376).

Our sub-task force has the assignment to look at contemporary services at several successful churches. However, after going through this exercise, it seems to me the question that we really are after is this: *What can FPC do to attract singles and families whose ages range from 25-55? What can we learn from those churches who are?*

## NARRATIVE

### **My conversation with Rev. Kate Fiedler, associate pastor for adult ministries...**

University Presbyterian Church (UPC) has two Sunday services, 8:30 and 11:00, neither of which is contemporary. As you can see from the comps above, its membership age range is quite solid across the board, from the youngest to the oldest. Its previous senior pastor, Rev. Bob Dunham, retired May 2017, after serving at UPC for 26 years, which can help explain UPC's stability. (During our last 26 years FPC has had 4 senior

From Carlen Maddux  
April 17, 2019

**University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, NC**  
<https://upcch.org/>

pastors and 3 interims.) [As a sidenote, Bob Dunham accepted a call last year to be the interim pastor at First Presbyterian of New York City.]

UPC seems to be bucking the trend with traditional services only. It did have an evening contemporary service a couple years ago until an associate pastor running it was called to be senior pastor at an Asheville church. I discussed this with Rev. Kate Fiedler, associate pastor for adult ministries, who's in her fifth year at UPC. "I was really surprised," she says, "when we recently surveyed our membership, particularly surprised by those in their 20s and 30s.

No one wanted a contemporary service. 'We want the traditional songs, the silence, and the rituals,' the vast majority responded on that survey."

Kate explains that following Bob Dunham's retirement, UPC underwent an extensive review of its strengths and weaknesses, finally approving in July 2018 an in-depth Mission Study Report. If interested, you can view it here... <https://upcch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/University-Pres-2018-Mission-Study-Report-1.pdf>.

Kate, however, suspects that when UPC calls its new senior pastor they might return to a blended evening service. She says a large independent church in Raleigh with branches throughout NC holds several full-on contemporary services near UPC. "We didn't want to compete."

She describes UPC's traditional service format as bending toward the "high church" end of the arc. As to the congregation's theological and social arc, "our membership stretches all the way across that spectrum, from conservative to progressive. We have for some time had a strong emphasis on empowering women for leadership. Our pastors also have officiated same-sex marriages within the church; we have several gay members, some who've served on the session."

"Bob (Dunham) is gifted and skilled at making sure everyone felt heard and had a place at the table, regardless of their perspective. But he was clear with his theological perspective that UPC was to be 'political, but not partisan.' He would say, 'We are a church family of privilege and power and we are called to advocate for justice.'" Example: UPC goes fairly deep into refugee issues, working with several refugee centers nearby. However, it is not a sanctuary church.

As she works with young adult small groups, Kate says she sees a certain "silo effect" that's developed. "We tend to stick with our own age groups rather than participate with others." UPC leadership is puzzling through that, wanting to keep the strength of these small groups while also trying to intersect with other ages.

"However, we are very intentional about the intergenerational mixing at our annual church retreats." UPC typically has up to 180 members attend these in early September in Montreat. "We make sure different age groups are represented within the small groups formed at our retreats. One interesting outcome of this is that the youth tell us they prefer this church-wide retreat to their own youth retreats."

From Carlen Maddux  
April 17, 2019

**University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, NC**  
<https://upcch.org/>

**My conversation with Kim McNeill, staff associate for youth ministries...**

“Over the past couple of years we’ve completely revamped our youth efforts. We’re now emphasizing relationships over programs. In so doing, we’re learning a lot about relation-based ministry.” Kim, who’s been at UPC for 12 years, oversees the middle school and high school groups. “A lot has changed. Many of our youth are now on sports travel teams on Sundays. We’re just feeling our way through the dark here, playing around with different concepts. How do we best minister to youth who are not available when we would like them to be available?” Kim estimates that 90% of their active youth have active parents, mostly in worship and committee work and less so in adult Sunday classes.

As we talked, Kim laid out some intriguing ideas as to what they are doing. I’ll describe these in bullet points...

- “We’ve begun what we call interest-based groups for our youth,” such as for cooking; hiking; social justice projects; home repairs for elderly members; baking; workout groups; and movies followed by discussion. Each of these small groups is led by 3-5 adults with similar interests; there are about 40 adult leaders in all, from college age up to retirees. Most adults don’t have their own children in their groups. These small, interest-based groups are held the same Sunday every month but at different times. The other three Sundays are for the more traditional youth group concept, which also are led by adult volunteers. These small groups attract about 45 middle-school kids and 30 high school.

“We’re finding that our youth are really craving interaction with the adults. I became convinced after enough 15-16 year-old boys told me they really like ‘talking with the old people.’” Kate says one mother approached her to say, “Thank you for these small groups. My child is doing nothing else at church.” This is UPC’s second year working with this concept. “We had a lot of kinks to work out the first year, but we seem to be gathering momentum now.”

- “We also have a robust youth choir” led by the same director for 33 years, but who’s now retiring. (She earned her bachelor of music degree in vocal performance at UNC and for two seasons was the coordinator for the USO Touring Shows in Southern Germany.) “Many of our youth do come to worship service, drawn largely by their experience in choir. Many in high school today started when they were four.” “Our church is a bit of an anomaly,” she laughs. “Choir youth turn their noses up at the contemporary music in many churches.” Children’s choir is pre-school thru the third grade (about 15 kids). The junior choir is 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades (20-25 kids). Youth choir is 6<sup>th</sup> grade through high school (40 or so). These choirs sing one Sunday a month in one of the two services.
- Kim strongly recommends a book. “I’ve used it for years and I give a copy to each of my committee members: [\*Sustainable Youth Ministry: From Last-Minute Scrambling to Long-Term Solutions\*](#) by Mark DeVries. “It’s really quite good for any type of ministry,” she says. (I’ve ordered a copy.)

“These small groups and our annual retreat (mentioned by Kate above) are really formative in inter-generational bonds. They are able to move outside their normal groups and get to know and check in on each other. Youth with the adults, adults with the youth, and adults of one age group with adults of another.”

From Carlen Maddux  
April 17, 2019

**University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, NC**  
<https://upcch.org/>

I'll conclude with these statements drawn from the Executive Summary to UPC's Mission Study Report mentioned above:

- “A key strength of the current congregation is the presence of both balance and diversity of members by age within the church; this allows for intergenerational interactions and opportunities while continually challenging our program staff and the session to provide meaningful educational and spiritual growth opportunities to all age groups.”
- “Similarly, there is both balance and diversity among the members in terms of their length of participation at UPC, so that UPC's rich history and lovingly held traditions are continually enhanced by new members who bring different experiences and fresh ideas.”
- “We enjoy strong preaching that is theologically rooted, intellectually challenging, inspirational, and contemporary.”
- “We are committed to balancing our disciplined “inward journey” of spiritual formation with the “outward journey” of reaching out with compassion and love to all who are in need – in our congregation, in our local community, and in the world beyond; this balance acknowledges that, in the end, these two movements are inseparable – like the inhale and the exhale of the same breath.”

**\*\*\*\* *that's all, folks* \*\*\*\***

From: Michelle Carothers  
April 17, 2019

**Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS**  
[www.villagepres.org](http://www.villagepres.org)

Village Presbyterian Church was founded in 1940. The current senior pastor, Reverend Tom Are, Jr., is only the third in the history of the church. In addition the senior pastor, there are six other members of the pastoral staff, each specializing in various areas, including: adult education, pastoral care, young adults, youth and pastor of a satellite campus.

At VP's main campus, three traditional services are held each Sunday at 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00. At least one of these services is broadcast on local radio. There is a Taizé service on the second Tuesday of each month, between the months of May & September. The satellite campus holds one traditional service at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday morning and an alternate (contemporary) worship service, called *The Gathering*, on Sunday evenings at 5 p.m., in the Friendship Hall.

In addition to this variety of worship services, Village Presbyterian operates a coffee shop, serving lattes, cappuccino, smoothies and cold lunches. It is open every day, except Saturday and appears to be staffed by volunteers - aged 14+ on Sundays & adults, every other day. There is also a separate Mission Center and a Food Pantry.

Lastly, Village Presbyterian operates a Child & Family Development Center, providing care for children from 6 mos. to kindergarten. The Center's board is required to be comprised of VP members, including at least one Elder, a pediatrician, an attorney and parents, along with the Director and Business Manager. The Center also includes a pre-school for children ages three to five.

- **Population:** Prairie Villiage's population is quite small, at just 21,824. The total population of the state of Kansas is 2,898,292, similar to that of the Tampa Bay area
- **Income Level:** Average income in Prairie Village is just under \$80k, per year. 62% of residents have a college degree and 22% have earned a graduate degree.
- **Median Age:** The median age at Village Presbyterian Church appears to be around 55, while the average age in the town is 39.
- **Religious Affiliation:** 56% of Kansas residents claim religious affiliation - 19.5% Catholic, 8% Methodist, 3% Presbyterian, 11% other.
- **Church Membership:** in 2017, the total membership at Village Presbyterian was 4789 (up 2% from 2016). Of those members, 2811 are female, 4775 are white, 347 have mobility issues, 225 have hearing issues. There are 29 affiliate members.
- **Average Weekly Attendance:** VP's weekly attendance averages 1265, which is up 12% year-over-year, but still only about 26% of total membership, at any one time. Membership has increased by ~200 people, over the past 5-years.
- **Church Budget:** VP's income for 2017 was \$5,636,343, while expenses were \$5,818,113 (up 11% from 2016). They appear to run a deficit, every year. Average giving per member = \$1,879. The endowment covers approximately 17% of the budget.

From: Michelle Carothers  
April 17, 2019

**Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS**  
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- **Membership Age Distribution:** 452 of VP's members are age 25 and under; and 44% are under age 55. However, the congregation appears to be an aging one, as the membership of those under age 45 declined by 34%, between 2016 and 2017. During that same period, those over 45 increased by 64% and those over 55 increased by 33%. Over the past 5-years, the greatest membership gains have been among those 65 and older.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/once-a-church-soon-to-be-affordable-housing--and-a-park/2017/07/27/4b16df42-7253-11e7-8f39-eeb7d3a2d304\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.208ab74ad24d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/once-a-church-soon-to-be-affordable-housing--and-a-park/2017/07/27/4b16df42-7253-11e7-8f39-eeb7d3a2d304_story.html?utm_term=.208ab74ad24d)

The Washington Post

This church sold its land for \$8.5 million, then bought a chunk back to build a park

By Patricia Sullivan  
July 27, 2017

Troubled by the lack of affordable housing in the area, Arlington Presbyterian Church's congregation had sold their 87-year-old sanctuary and moved out. A nonprofit affordable-housing developer began demolishing the church, with its green-sided steeple, in anticipation of building 173 low-income apartments.

Then the congregation had another civically minded idea. Since the developer, the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH), didn't need about a quarter of the Columbia Pike property it had bought from the church for \$8.5 million last year, why not create a small pocket of green space there to cushion the concrete in the highly urban neighborhood and provide a space of reflection and revival?

It was almost too late. When the church delegation called on APAH, the developer was about to sign a sales agreement with a single-family-home builder that wanted to buy the leftover parcel and was willing to wire them \$700,000, the final funding needed to make the entire \$71 million project work.

"We asked them to stall," said church elder Susan Etherton. In a five-week whirlwind of activity, the church got the consent of the National Capital Presbytery, figured out the costs of land purchase, taxes, utilities, park maintenance and design, and made a matching offer. "It was more than amazing — it's miraculous!" Etherton said.

Nina Janopaul, APAH's chief executive, agreed. "Deadlines help all of us," she said, laughing. "I think this will be a great center and hub of activity" on Columbia Pike, she added.

The congregation is working on what will go in the outdoor space. One of the most-requested amenities is a labyrinth. There are also suggestions for a pollinator or small vegetable garden.

A church member has already donated an Adirondack chair, painted with the words "Pause here." A neighbor offered his architectural skills to plan the space.

"This is a way we can tithe back to the community," Etherton said. "Missionally, we are called to care for creation, and we're hopeful our neighbors will join us."

Other churches have built and sustained semi-public garden spaces over the years. In New Jersey, the College of Saint Elizabeth has a 92-year-old garden inspired by the plays and poems of William Shakespeare. In Washington, the most prominent ones include the Franciscan Monastery's gardens and Washington National Cathedral's Bishop's Garden and Olmstead Woods.

Jim Shepherd, the cathedral's director of preservation and facilities, said the 57 acres, designed in the early 20th century, encourage visitors to linger and contemplate. "Our grounds are really, in many ways, an extension of our cathedral," he said.

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*The Washington Post*

*This church sold its land for \$8.5 million, then bought a chunk back to build a park*

*By Patricia Sullivan*

*July 27, 2017*

The Arlington church hopes to rent some of the 9,000 square feet of ground-level space for their worship services in the new Gilliam Place development, named after a longtime church volunteer. The official ground-breaking for that project happened Thursday afternoon and was attended by partners who put the jigsaw puzzle of financing together: the Virginia Housing Development Authority, which authorized \$15 million in federal tax credits; Capital One and Enterprise Community Partners, which provided \$31 million in private financing; officials from Arlington County, which gave \$18 million in loans; officials from the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, which gave \$700,000; and many church members.

The project, which is scheduled to be finished in 24 months, also includes a \$500,000 loan from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta.

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[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/the-church-is-not-the-building-it-is-our-faith-and-our-people/2015/12/26/dce43392-a41f-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.2dc97d98e239](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/the-church-is-not-the-building-it-is-our-faith-and-our-people/2015/12/26/dce43392-a41f-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb_story.html?utm_term=.2dc97d98e239)

*The Washington Post*

*'The church is not the building. It is our faith and our people.'*

*By Patricia Sullivan*

*December 26, 2015*

The church members asked themselves, "For whom are our hearts breaking?" They set out to find the answer by quizzing the waitresses, teachers and store clerks who bought from the food truck in the church parking lot or shopped at the nearby farmers market in Arlington's fast-gentrifying Columbia Pike neighborhood.

Again and again, they heard the same worries from working-class residents, many of them immigrants: "I work here, but I can't afford to live here anymore."

Eventually, said elder Susan Etherton, she and other members of the Arlington Presbyterian Church's vision committee came to believe God was calling them to action. The century-old congregation decided to sell its building, parking lot and grounds to the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing, which will tear down the stone structure and replace it with 173 affordable apartments.

It was not an easy or speedy choice. Church membership, which was 150 when the Rev. Sharon Core arrived 17 years ago, has shrunk to about 65. But Core said that wasn't the main reason the congregation decided to sell. The process started in 2012, she said, when the church began seeking to renew its mission and build

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/the-church-is-not-the-building-it-is-our-faith-and-our-people/2015/12/26/dce43392-a41f-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.2dc97d98e239](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/the-church-is-not-the-building-it-is-our-faith-and-our-people/2015/12/26/dce43392-a41f-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb_story.html?utm_term=.2dc97d98e239)

*The Washington Post*

*'The church is not the building. It is our faith and our people.'*

*By Patricia Sullivan*

*December 26, 2015*

better ties to its neighbors along Columbia Pike.

It took months of prayer and reflection, and then years of work. The church members had to be persuaded, and some were not. Church leaders needed approval from the National Capital Presbytery to sell the property, and their first proposal was turned down. They had to find a developer willing to work with them and secure the permits required to turn the expansive site into a multifamily building.

"People have been married here, had their children baptized here and held memorial services for loved ones," Core said. "We had serious, serious discussions, and it's not something we did lightly. But we know in our heart of hearts the church is not the building. It is our faith and our people."

This church is not the first to sell or reduce its worship space to facilitate the building of homes for those in need. About a decade ago, the First Baptist Church of Clarendon decided to build a 10-story affordable apartment house around a new and smaller sanctuary, triggering years of conflicts with neighbors.

This fall in Alexandria, St. James United Methodist Church agreed to sell its three-acre site in the Beauregard neighborhood to the nonprofit developer AHC, which plans to create 93 affordable apartments and sell the rest of the property to a market-rate developer. AHC is in talks with another Alexandria church that is considering a similar project.

The churches' goals are twofold: to ensure their own financial viability while easing a growing crisis for low earning people in a region where the cost of housing keeps going up. As land becomes more valuable and rents increase, fewer privately owned apartments are affordable to those earning less than half of the area's median income, which is \$107,000 for a family of four.

Two years ago, 3,600 people applied for a chance to rent one of the 122 apartments at the then-new Arlington Mill affordable housing building. Three months ago, the Arlington County Board said nearly 1 in 5 residences built in the county over the next quarter-century must be affordable for low- to moderate-income households.

Arlington Presbyterian Church members have understood the problem intellectually for years. But it wasn't until they began speaking to their neighbors that the crisis made an emotional impact. Etherton, one of seven church members who did the outreach, said when the group reported back to the congregation, she could almost see people's perspectives shift. "When they heard those stories of heartbreak, there was head-nodding and agreement," she said.

"When you tell personal stories, they have a resonance."

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*The Washington Post*

*By Patricia Sullivan*

*December 26, 2015*

The congregation was not unanimous in support of the decision, Core and Etherton said. Some members objected and then stopped coming to church. One unsuccessfully applied to have the building declared a historic landmark, which would have made redevelopment extremely difficult.

The first proposal, in 2013, was to rebuild the existing church with a coffee shop, day-care center and community space and attach affordable-housing units to it. But the National Capital Presbytery, which holds the property in trust, turned down that idea. A year later, the church members returned with a plan to sell the property to the Arlington Partnership, a well-established nonprofit group that has built similar projects in the community.

Representatives from the partnership helped explain to the Presbytery how selling the building would further the congregation's spiritual and moral missions. This time, the oversight group gave its unanimous approval — and a standing ovation. The church is in the process of selling the land to the partnership for \$8.5 million, 20 percent below market value. Arlington County is lending the partnership about \$18 million for the purchase and construction. The new apartments will be named Gilliam Place, in honor of former elder Ronda Gilliam, the church's first African American member and the founder of a clothing donation program for neighborhood residents in the early 1960s.

Nina Janopaul, the Arlington Partnership's president and chief executive, said the design will incorporate stone from the church into the street-level facade. Sixty percent of the apartments will be studios or one-bedroom units, and the complex will be marketed to low-income senior citizens.

The County Board recently approved rezoning the land for multi-family residential use. The church will turn the property over to the Arlington Partnership by August; Core said the last Sunday services probably will be held there in late May or early June. She has begun clearing out furnishings and giving away the pews, the organ console and hymnals to other churches and homeless shelters.

The congregation is looking for temporary rental space along Columbia Pike; it plans to rent ground-floor space in the new apartment building so it can worship at the church site once again.

The vote by county lawmakers to rezone the property and award the loan took place on a Saturday in early December. The next day, the scheduled Gospel reading was Ezra 3:10-13, a passage that describes the Israelites rebuilding their holy temple in Jerusalem after returning from exile in Babylon.

"No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise," the passage says. "And the sound was heard far away." For Core, the imagery was fitting.

"I found it powerful," the pastor said, "that when the people saw the new temple, there was weeping and shouts of joy."