

# **Final Report for the WPC Membership Coordinating Team**

**February 19, 2015**

Well over 100 people associated with Webster Presbyterian Church contributed to the information contained in this report by: engaging in planning; being interviewed; performing interviews; suggesting references; summarizing references; or synthesizing the resulting data. There were three desired outcomes from this effort. First it was hoped that this activity would offer voice to the Holy Spirit through the actions of those contributors as well as the hearing of the Congregation. A second critical outcome of this effort (and the information contained in this report) was to facilitate communication and dialog within the Congregation of Webster Presbyterian Church. The third desired outcome of this work was to initiate the discussion on the changing WPC membership by collecting information on: 1) What we are proud of, 2) How are we working together, 3) What has generated trends of change in WPC membership, and 4) What actions might be considered to address membership issues. This activity will wrap up with a draft report to the Session. Tasks that were planned but not completed in this effort were a complete assessment of the summarized results and holding discussion sessions with the Session, the Board of Deacons, and congregation.

# Table of Contents

Guiding Thoughts .....	6
Questions .....	7
Why Have a Membership Coordinating Team? .....	7
What Drove the Formation of the Membership Coordination Team? .....	7
What were the Initial Goals of the Team? .....	10
What did the Team do? .....	10
Who Contributed? .....	11
Table 1. Interview List .....	13
Table 2. References List .....	15
How We Answered .....	16
What are we proud of about WPC? .....	17
What are Common Complaints and Negative Comments? .....	19
What Can Explain Membership Trends? .....	20
What are Ideas to Get Back or Retain Members? .....	22
What are Ideas to Attract New Members? .....	24
What They Would Tell Us .....	26
List of References .....	27
Brief Description of References .....	28
Suggestions of WPC Advantages .....	34
Ideas to Explain Membership Trends .....	35
Ideas to Attract New Members .....	42
Ideas to address membership in general .....	49

Suggestions for Other References .....	60
Example Findings .....	64
Gifts of the Spirit .....	64
Common Complaints and Negative Comments.....	64
Roles and Responsibilities - Example Findings.....	65
Example Roles and Responsibility Finding 1 - Membership Supercommittee .....	65
Example Roles and Responsibility Finding 2 - Nurture Supercommittee .....	65
Example Roles and Responsibility Finding 3 - Coordinated Signage.....	65
Membership Trends - Example Findings.....	67
Example Trends Finding 1 - Limited Public Draw.....	67
Example Trends Finding 2- External Trends We Cannot Affect .....	67
Example Trends Finding 2 - External Trends We Can Affect.....	67
Potential Actions - Example Findings.....	68
Example Actions Finding 1 - Immediate Coordination of "Lost Sheep" Activities .....	68
Example Actions Finding 2 - Light Sanctuary Windows at Night .....	68
Example Actions Finding 3 - Wednesday Game Night.....	68
Example Actions Finding 4 - Initiate an Alternative Worshipping Community.....	68
Recommendations .....	69
Proposed Next Steps.....	69
The Herd is on the Move: WPC in Transition.....	70
Appendix A: Motions.....	73
Motion #1: Form a Membership Coordination Team .....	73
Motion #2: Logistics of the Membership Coordination Team .....	74
Appendix B: Newsletter Articles .....	75
September 2014.....	75

October 2014 .....	75
November 2014 .....	76
December 2014.....	76
January 2015 .....	77
February 2015 .....	78
March 2015 .....	78
Appendix C: Blank Interview Form.....	80
Appendix D: Interviews Data Set .....	81
D1: Background.....	81
D2: Question 1 - What are you most proud of at WPC? .....	85
D3: Question 2A - What do you do to attract new members? .....	91
D4: Question 2B - What do you do retain current members?.....	96
D5: Question 2C - What do you do get back inactive members? .....	100
D6: Question 3A - Do you have ideas to explain membership changes? .....	103
D7: Question 3B - Do you have ideas to attract new members?.....	111
D8: Question 3C - Do you have ideas to address membership in general?.....	117
D9: Question 4 - What other groups do you work with regarding membership? .....	126
D10: Question 5 - Do you have suggestions for other individuals or groups to interview? .....	130
D11: Additional Information .....	135
Appendix E: References - Additional Information .....	143
G1: New Beginnings Assessment Program (reference provided separately) .....	143
R1: The Feminization of the Church (full article included) .....	145
R2: 10 Year Trends - WPC (reference provided separately) .....	153
R4: Why Men Hate Going to Church (full book - not provided) .....	163
R5: Why Millennials are leaving the Church (full article provided) .....	164

R6: Church, Here's Why People are Leaving You (full article provided) .....	167
R7: PCUSA Decline in Churches, Members Continued in 2013 (full article provided).....	173
R8: Downtown Churches Growing Younger (full article provided).....	175
R9: For Church Leaders (partial article provided) .....	176
R10: How do we let go of Sunday Morning(full article provided) .....	177
R11: The Engaging Church (available by request).....	180
R12: Leading Beyond the Walls (full book - not provided) .....	181
R13: We Can Do That ("We Can Do That" provided separately) .....	182
R14: Growing Healthy Churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)(provided separately) .....	183
R15: Beyond Bricks and Mortar(full article provided) .....	184
R16: Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas (full article provided separately) .....	186
R17: The Emergent Church (example articles provided) .....	187
R18: 1001 worshipping communities (example article provided).....	190
R19: NeXT Church (example information provided).....	192
R20: Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation(full article provided) .....	195
R21: The Apostles of Apollo (full book - not provided).....	196
R22: The Little White Church on NASA Road 1(full book not provided).....	197
R23: Many Churches Experiencing Deline (full article provided) .....	198
R24: New Year's Resolutions for the Hospitable Church(full article provided) .....	201

# Guiding Thoughts

God is calling Webster Presbyterian Church to be a place of worship in the Greater Bay Area that welcomes all God's children and serves Christ as active disciples to create a more loving, affirming, and just world through openness to spiritual inquiry, civility of discourse, scientific ideas, and artistic expression.

(WPC Mission Statement)

To live as Jesus taught us, with kindness and tenderheartedness, being forgiving of one another; to be a genuine family of faith. *Let mutual love continue. Hebrews 13:1*

(From the 2012 WPC Vision Report)

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

John 13:35

New International Version (NIV)

(Guiding Scripture for SATF)

Make straight the way for the Lord.

John 1:23

Isaiah 40:3

New International Version (NIV)

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Acts 9:31

New International Version (NIV)

# Questions

## ***Why Have a Membership Coordinating Team?***

There were many answers to this question that is the title of this sub-section. In an effort to keep awareness to this fact, there were ten reasons given for fielding the Membership Coordinating Team in August of 2014:

1. A natural follow-on to Visioning, SATF, PNC, and SATF Alignment.
2. Collect the information needed for a discussion on church growth.
3. Get the congregation actively involved in the future of WPC.
4. Assure that the groups dealing with membership are coordinated.
5. Shore up members that may be drifting away.
6. Provide information to the pastor nominating process.
7. Offset negative comments with positive statements.
8. Get people and groups talking to one another.
9. Bring in new ideas that have yet to be considered.
10. This is a starting place to deal with difficult membership issues.

## ***What Drove the Formation of the Membership Coordination Team?***

There were many non-specific reasons to initiate membership discussions with the Membership Coordinating Team or some other mechanism. These reasons included general discussion among members about: the drop-off in active members; the causes of the negative trend in numbers; ideas concerning what to do about it (as well as ideas that nothing can be done); and a rise in general negativity. However, there were also some specific and identifiable reasons to initiate membership discussions. Some of these are listed below.

*Vision Statement:* A significant whole church activity produced a Vision Statement that was provided to the Session in February of 2013. An excerpt from the introduction provides a snapshot of WPC:

“To develop an understanding of who we are, the Session participated in a Presbytery of New Covenant-facilitated event entitled “Future Story”. This event provided us with demographic information about our congregation, our community, and the larger denomination. We were also reminded of some interesting facts about who we are as a congregation; did you know:

- WPC is a commuter church, we draw members from many local communities; we have a strong sense of “church family” and enjoy many traditional fellowship activities, as well as a rich music ministry.
- We are known as a “mission oriented” church with a high regard for science that is part of our faith life, i.e., Lunar Communion.
- Our community is more highly educated in general than the rest of the state, but this trend is in decline and expected to continue to decline slightly for the foreseeable future.
- Our keen analytical style and intellect are an enormous strength, but we shouldn’t neglect “heart learning” and work to develop a greater comfort with prayer.
- Our community demographics indicate that while the Clear Lake area is aging, there are increasing numbers of young children. Lots of people in our area consider themselves spiritual (58.8%) while only about a quarter (25.4%) consider attendance at religious services important.”.

This entire Vision Statement provided significant input to the development of the church mission statement, the SATF report, the PNC, and even this Membership Coordinating Team’s efforts.

*Session Retreat 2013:* The Session retreat in April of 2013 discussed some very interesting demographic information concerning the WPC, where it draws its members and who are its neighbors. However, the true utility in that information in the future of WPC could not be explored at that time.

*SATF Report:* The Strategic Analysis Task Force (SATF) released its report in September 2013 and included the following statement:

“The PNC should inform all candidates that it is likely that in the fullness of time, they may become a solo pastor here at WPC contingent on the evolving size of the congregation and the need to faithfully support God’s vision for this church.”.

Many read this as a statement of fact that WPC’s membership was in steady decline with no hope of reversal. The ramification of that mindset was that subsequent discussions began with the status quo assumption. The alternative interpretation (as a call to discernment, action, and change) has been rarely considered.

*Church Growth Proposal:* At the October 2013 Session meeting, elder Tim Murray (chair of the Outreach Committee) put forward a motion to form a church growth committee. One statement from the rationale for that motion was:

“Acquiring new church members is a process of 1) attracting visitors, 2) greeting visitors, 3) appropriate individual visitor follow up, 4) converting visitors to members, and 5) onboarding

new members into church life. Current committees have separate roles in the new member process.”.

However, the motion failed as it was tied to significant changes in the ministry committee structure. The primary discussion of church growth did not continue.

*Formation of the PNC:* The PNC was formed in November of 2013 and by its nature took on a significant role of future planning for the church. However, as the Nominating Committee worked to call the PNC, it was apparent that many congregants wanted to be actively engaged in planning the future of WPC. However, there was no outlet for such passion to be expressed.

Additionally, it was recognized that the time of transition was upon WPC. If changes needed to be made, the entry of a new senior pastor was the beginning of a time for such transformation. To be ready for a transformation, the church needed to spend some time gathering its collective thoughts.

*SATF Alignment – Children’s Ministry Team:* During late 2013 and throughout 2014, the different ministry areas were developing plans to align with the SATF. The CMT delivered its written alignment plans in December of 2013 to Session and presented the plans at the March 2014 meeting. One recommendation in that plan was:

“A super committee or task force should be formed from multiple committees (including CMT) to focus on the cooperative goals of church growth and demographic needs;”.

The intent was to discuss such a proposal in more detail at the Session retreat in May of 2014.

*Session Retreat 2014:* The Session retreat in May of 2014 did not produce the significant integrated discussion on church membership that was desired. However, several actions were defined that were later re-iterated in the data generated by the Membership Coordination Team.

*The Herd is on the Move:* In early June of 2014, the Children's Ministry Team approached the Adult Ministry Team to consider a class to cover the new ways in which learning and study take place with current digital media and a compatible generation of students (which includes children through young adults). This eventually grew to become a full day event to cover trends outside WPC and within WPC. This event was the natural place to hold a congregational discussion on the findings of the Membership Coordinating Team (the information contained in this report).

This event could have been used to enhance congregational cohesion; initiate dialog, discernment, and planning; or provide the new pastor with a way to interact the church and

understand the local situation - depending upon when it happened. However once the new pastor was called, planning the event was curtailed. Section 9 of this report contains the last planning outline for this event.

*Membership Coordinating Team:* The motions to form the Membership Coordinating were delivered to the Session in June of 2014 and passed. These motions are provided in Appendix A. The initial membership of the team was provided to the Session at the July 2014 meeting. The team began to work in earnest in August of 2014. At a later meeting of the initial leadership of the team, it was decided to draw heavily on at-large members. The target of this activity was to provide core material for discussions among the ruling elders, the sitting deacons, the affected committees, and the congregation as a whole. Although the work of this group spanned the time of three heads-of-staff (Helen Rose Moore - interim, Helen DeLeon - acting, and Keith Uffman - permanent), the target audience was the congregation of WPC. This report is the culmination of that activity. However, as the work eventually completed after installation of a new senior pastor, the final use of this information will be coordinated with the transition plans of Rev. Uffman and by the 2015 Session.

### ***What were the Initial Goals of the Team?***

When initiated, the most significant products of the Membership Coordinating Team were relational in nature as can be seen in the list of the previous section. However, there was also an identifiable final product as well - a report with four parts:

1. Roles and responsibilities of the different groups that touch our membership including the holes and overlaps that exist,
2. A draft list of the trends that are changing our membership (what can we do nothing about and what can we something about),
3. A draft list of actions that we need to undertake in two timeframes (immediately and with a permanent pastor), and
4. A catalogue of positive statements about WPC to use and share.

The extent to which these four planned collections of information as well as the relational input of this activity can be assessed are contained in the document before the reader.

### ***What did the Team do?***

Formal and informal planning meetings were held to develop a set of interview questions and interviewees. The interviewees included committees, small groups, staff members, and

individuals. The congregation was solicited to provide volunteers and suggestions for the interviews. The congregation was provided with periodic newsletter articles that are recorded in Appendix B.

People representing the Membership Coordinating Team performed the interviews and provided a report. A blank report example is provided in Appendix C. A randomized list of the individuals, groups, and committees is provided in Section 4 of this report. The information from the reports was collected under each interview question. The Deacons provided feedback from several families that have not been actively attending church recently. All of this collected information was assessed to extract sensitive information. This sensitive information was provided to the Personnel committee and removed from the data. The desensitized information (which is repeated in this report as Appendix D) was then summarized into a list of bulletized points to cover the basic questions (see Section 5 of this report).

In a parallel manner, different people suggested references that might be studied to add insight to the questions of interest. Sections 4 and Sections 6 list these references. These references were written up using the same questions as the interviews used to produce the data that resides in Appendix E of this report. The same collection and summary processes, comparable to the interview data, was used to generate the information in Section 7 of this report.

### ***Who Contributed?***

A major success of this effort were the relationships that formed and the dialog that resulted between WPC members. Hence, it is instructive to obtain an understanding of the depth to which this interaction permeated the congregation. The planning, organization, and early discussions to prepare for the eventual Session motions that initiated these efforts (see Appendix A) involved several deacons (Kim Harano, Michael Cooper, Anne Waehner, Margaret Harris) many of the class of 2014, 2015, and 2016 ruling elders (including but not limited to Melisa Ferguson, Marjorie Seiter, Jimm Cooper, Lynn Snowden, Jonathan Snowden, Jim Young, Carla Yager, Katie Rendon, Lynn Godwin, Janis Edwards, Kevin Wooten), Helen Rose Moore, and Helen DeLeon, as well as many folks who would eventually become interviewers and contributors (Coco Motley, Al Manson, Jennifer Carr, Pat Brackett, Roy Phillips, Kevin Snowden, Jonathan Snowden, Linda Smith-Gregory, Freeman Gregory, Elizabeth Stoltz, Jamee Wilson, Phyllis Koenig, Mary Lawrence). Several members of the PNC provided input during the planning stages of this effort (Kathy Brauer, Michael Cooper, Kevin Wooten, and Courtney Clifford). All members of the Session as well as the Clerk (Gene Fisseler) and both pastors (Helen Rose Moore, and Helen DeLeon) participated in the discussion and voting for the motions that started this effort.

There were two additional planning sessions that were attended by many of the above individuals after the motion was passed. A leadership planning meeting was also held that included the class of 2014 elders, Helen Rose Moore, and George James. Table 1 provides the committees, groups, staff members, and individuals that were interviewed as well as the folks that performed the interviews. Note that the committees and groups were interviews that included multiple WPC members not mentioned by name. Also, the Deacon interviews included a critical group of individuals who are members but have become irregular attendees or have stopped attending completely.

Table 2 provides information on who suggested reference materials and who summarized that information. Late in this process an actions group formed (Jimm Cooper, Coco Motley, Jeanie Murray, Roy Phillips, Kim Harano, and George James) to perform an incomplete set of final assessments and post-effort planning. Coco Motley and Jeanie Murray performed the critical 12th hour task of collapsing the interview information into bulletized summary lists found in the body of this report. Coco Motley, Kim Harano, and George James summarized the reference material. Mary Sumrall-Sydnor also provided end-of-effort consultation. The draft of this report was provided to the 2015 Session, which by that time included the class of 2017 elders, Pastor Keith Uffman, and Clerk Dennis Waehner. Therefore the number of people involved in the dialog associated with the Membership Coordinating Team effort approached 150 WPC members. This response on the part of the Membership of WPC, has assured success in this effort.

Special note must be provided to the contributions of the late Janis Edwards. Janis was a class of 2014 ruling elder, leading the WPC Care ministry, and a member of the WPC Personnel Committee. She held a critical leadership role in this effort. In fact, she defined how the information would be databased and assessed. She continued to make an impact of this effort until her Earthly contributions were not possible.

**Table 1. Interview List**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Interviewers</b>
C1	Deacons	Jamee Wilson, Jonathan Snowden, Coco Motley, Lynn Godwin
C2	Outreach	George James, Kim Harano, Anne Waehner
C3	Communications	George James, Kim Harano
C4	Welcoming	Anne Waehner, Kim Harano, Jennifer Carr, Jonathan Snowden
C5	YMT	Jamee Wilson,
C6	CMT	Coco Motley
C7	Membership Review Team	Jimm Cooper, George James
<b>Code</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Interviewers</b>
G1	New Beginnings Assessment Program	Pat Brackett, Mary Lawrence, Michael Cooper, Helen DeLeon, George James
G2	Diane Kane Covenant Group	Coco Motley
G3	Elizabeth Stoltz Covenant Group	Elizabeth Stoltz
<b>Code</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Interviewers</b>
S1	Helen Rose Moore	Kim Harano, Al Manson,
S2	Helen DeLeon	Jamee Wilson, Michael Cooper, Mary Lawrence
S3	Linda Smith-Gregory	Coco Motley, Phyllis Koenig
S4	Jessie Kuehner	Coco Motley, Elizabeth Stoltz
S5	Glenn and Geri Foster	George James, Mary Lawrence
S6	Presbytery Staff - Mary Marcotte	Mary Lawrence, Michael Cooper, Jamee Wilson (Report Pending)

**Table 1. Interview List (cont.)**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Individuals</b>	<b>Interviewers</b>
	Jackie Allen	George James
	Shallon Barboza	Coco Motley
	Rachel Boeckenhauer	Coco Motley
	Lynn Godwin	George James
	Bryan James	George James (Report Pending)
	Tom, Carole, & Patty Kloves	George James
	Brian Kuehner	Jordan James
	Doug McCann	George James
	Chuck & Nina Moede	Michael Cooper, George James
	Melissa Moede	George James
	Betty Montgomery	Coco Motley
<b>Code</b>	<b>Deacon Interview</b>	<b>Interviewers</b>
D1		Deacons
D2		Deacons
D3		Deacons
D4		Deacons
D5		Deacons
D6		Deacons
D7		Deacons
D8		Deacons
D9		Deacons
D10		Deacons
D11		Deacons
D12		Deacons
D13		Deacons
D14		Deacons

**Table 2. References List**

Code	References	Suggested by	Summarized by
G1	New Beginnings Assessment Program	Pat Brackett, Helen DeLeon	Pat Brackett, Mary Lawrence, Michael Cooper, Helen DeLeon, George James
R1	The Feminization of the Church	Glenn and Geri Foster	George James
R2	10 Year Trends - WPC	George James, Gene Fisseler, Jimmy Spivey	George James
R3	This Land of Strangers	George James	George James
R4	Why Men Hate Going to Church	Glenn and Geri Foster, George James	George James
R5	Why Millenials Are Leaving the Church	Coco Motley	George James
R6	Church Here's Why People are Leaving You	Coco Motley	George James
R7	PCUSA Decline in Churches, Members Continued in 2013	Coco Motley	George James
R8	Downtown Churches Growing Younger	Elizabeth Stoltz	George James
R9	For Church Leaders	Elizabeth Stoltz	George James
R10	How Do We Let Go of Sunday Mornings	Helen DeLeon	George James
R11	The Engaging Church	Carol Kloves	George James
R12	Leading Beyond the Walls	Michael Cooper	Kim Harano
R13	Transformational Church References	George James	George James
R14	Growing Healthy Churches in PCUSA	Webster PNC	Coco Motley
R15	Beyond Bricks and Mortar	Linda Smith-Gregory	George James
R16	Teaching & Learning w the iGeneration	Linda Smith-Gregory	George James
R17	Emergent Church References	Kevin Snowden	George James
R18	1001 Worshipping Communities	Helen Rose Moore	Kim Harano
R19	NeXT Church References	Linda Smith-Gregory	Kim Harano
R20	Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation	Linda Smith-Gregory	Coco Motley
R21	Apostles of Apollo	Pat Brackett	Kim Harano
R22	The Little White Church on NASA Rd 1	George James	George James
R23	Many Churches in Decline	Al Manson	George James
R24	New Year's Resolutions for the Hospitable Church	Coco Motley	Coco Motley

## How We Answered

The last subsection (*Who Contributed?*) may well have been a high level summary of the most important indirect success of this effort as it spoke to relationships and dialog. However, this section (*How We Answered*), may be most important direct success of this work. This section provides the summarized feedback from the interviews. The interview data has been collected into a bulletized list of the answers from the WPC membership. The intent is to provide the data in a form appropriate for either small group discussion or reporting as-is. The primary questions title the subsections:

- A. What are we proud of about WPC?
- B. What are common complaints and negative comments?
- C. What can explain the trends in membership?
- D. What are ideas to get back or retain members?
- E. What are ideas to attract new members?

### ***What are we proud of about WPC?***

- The wonderful, caring people who are our church family
- Sense of community - people are very genuine and caring
- Healthy congregation with core members who are strong
- People are very genuine and are always there for support and to show they care
- "Faithful in service" core membership which is very service/mission minded, both inside the church and in the community
- Care, kindness, generosity of our family of faith - whether it's assisting seniors, supporting McWhirter Elementary, providing and tending to memorial services or missions near and far, our members step forward to help
- Members who have stuck through the hard times and the volunteers in our WPC community
- Proud of the changes. Some have been hard, but they needed to happen.
- Strong mission focus which attracts young families
- Excellent music program that is far above average - bells, choir, recorders; great variety. Music ties the whole congregation together - Judy, the choir, all the musicians. Glenn is a rock!
- Top notch music program with great leaders. Love Joyful Noyze!
- Easy to get involved with lots of activities and opportunities for all
- Multitude for programs and activities for every age group
- Flexibility and progressive thinking of this church
- Intergenerational feel, interaction of young and old, full spectrum sense, youth helping the elderly, mentoring and encouraging, not just focused on "the youth" or "the elders".
- Vibrant youth group, encourages participation and leading, encourages activities both inside and outside of the church. They have stuck it out even with the facilities they have.
- Mission work, Youth Synod, Conclaves - we may be small, but we have good participation
- Adult Sunday School often looks at science/technology/religion interactions
- Flexibility and progressive thinking of this church
- WPC is true/faithful to the message (not just "be the best you can be" theology)
- Offer two different styles of worship - like weekly communion at early service
- Strong commitment to traditional worship, as well as openness to new things in worship
- Covenant groups - getting them started and having them continue to grow. We now have about 80 members in small group ministry.
- Small groups are very important, as are the various activities/groups in the church
- Senior ministry - it was really needed and has been successful . Lots of participation in luncheons with speakers, trips, phone-a- friend, helping hands, holy rollers

- Went to Peru and established a relationship; people who went were transformed as well as the people there
- We are sometimes resistant to change, but rise to new opportunities (Family Promise, Summer Spotlight, Peru, etc.) and we do it well.
- Our wonderful, unique history and the level in which we are involved in the community
- Deacons are one of the most positive, well-functioning groups in the church. Wonderful group!
- Our beautiful sanctuary and stained glass windows
- Encouraged by the conscientiousness with which budget is approved. Seek the Lord's will to benefit the congregation - take spending money very seriously
- One of the best things about our church - the children are very warm and welcoming, not biased. Visiting children want to come back.
- Deacon board is wonderful, very caring - the heart of the church. They are one of the most positive, well-functioning groups in the church.
- Friendliness, openness, and welcoming nature of the church
- Proud of all the work we do in the community, such as McWhirter, Bay Area Turning Point, Meals on Wheels, ICM, etc.
- WPC makes it easy to get involved with lots of opportunities for everyone.
- Effort to understand what worship is and how it can look, and how it can change people.
- Jessie has done a great job bringing the Youth together.
- Linda is a great asset. She makes parents feel that their children will do good here.
- WPC has a strong, faithful, energetic core who are very involved in a wide variety of ways - teaching, singing. There is something for everyone.
- We're NOT a mega church - we'll know you by name!
- WPC is highly educated and ability blessed.
- WPC is has a reputation for not being afraid to study itself.

## ***What are Common Complaints and Negative Comments?***

- General unhappiness about service times - need to reconsider the times and how they disrupt Sunday School classes
- Services need to be shorter and end on time
- Many dislike the plastic podium in the front of the church - hard to see speakers and sound not good - why not use the pulpit??
- Services run too long - if something is going to cause the service to run longer (baptism, 3 Minutes for Mission, etc) then we need to shorten or cut something else - shorter prayers, creeds, or fewer verses of the songs
- Really need more things going on at the church to draw in people from outside - Bridge group, Spanish classes, Special interest groups - caregivers, grief support, divorce group, etc .
- Don't change the service times so often and reduce the number of 'joint services" to minimize church worship time confusion. Now up to 7 per year.
- Fix thing like Bouton Hall before we spend money on things like Outreach.
- Lots of relationship-building activities for women in the church, but not so much for men.
- Need fast reliable internet all over the campus. Still have cable internet.
- Education wing not inviting and really needs several repairs.
- Need a new membership directory - should be updated. Need printed copies, not just online.

## ***What Can Explain Membership Trends?***

- External issues - PCUSA - controversial issues and negative publicity nationally as well as locally
- Nationwide - fewer people go to church- unchurched - not as important to families
- Children's extra-curricular activities are now scheduled on Wednesdays and Sundays which often interfere with church activities
- Mainline protestant decline
- Economics - job loss in area, especially layoffs at NASA
- Church not as visible because of street changes/bypass
- Change in family dynamics - divorced parents, fewer children at home on weekend
- Divisive issues - Children's School, Mark leaving, etc.
- Children's ministry not as viable as should be - not getting or retaining young families with children - education wing really needs some work
- Lack of stability and leadership during the last 10 years at the Head of Staff position
- Nothing to attract college age and young adults
- Facilities need upgrading
- Youth and Children's ministry needs to be better coordinated; should meet each quarter to plan for the next quarter. All scheduling must be in coordination with other events in the church.
- Disconnect in Sunday School between scripture and activities
- Don't need to use technology unless relevant to lesson
- Should be a budget for childcare separate from Sunday School budget - inhibits how much childcare is offered; parents would probably pay a set fee for childcare
- Loss of many strong members through death, relocating, lack of leadership
- Financial setbacks that have been hard to overcome
- We have been able to survive many unfortunate things through the years, but have still remained faithful and loyal to the church - such as: youth director (the one who came with Woody) left after only a year, Caressa left - hard on Youth for several years, Children's School closing which really divided the church and caused many with young children to leave, many felt we should have built an educational wing instead of the sanctuary, Mary Swan leaving - strain on personnel, problems with land for the sanctuary because of the house on the corner, and other issues with Mark.
- Stopped doing outside weddings - brought people into the church
- Change after Woody's departure. There was an ugliness, a rift, and we have needed a pastor to lead, unite, and comfort the church ever since

- Churches are leaving our presbytery. Our congregation is more conservative than our leadership. May need a forum for this area. WPC didn't let the church be affected by these social issues in the past, we focused on faith.
- One voice - the congregation needs to come together. We are trying to move back to "we all bring our gifts" instead of most things being left to the clergy.
- Message from the pulpit is very important. The tone is important. Don't want to sound desperate for new members.
- If the congregation is too concentrated in one type of person (i.e., "young families"), it is difficult for those who don't fit the dominant role to find a place to thrive.
- Numbers in Children's Ministry have gone down. At a critical point where we don't have enough kids to sustain our programs. Not enough parents to help.
- Two main classifications that people move on from WPC: (Membership Review Team)
  - A. Out-grew the church (married into another church, kids in another church, divorce, etc.) Maybe 20% will be hard to get back.
  - B. Left for personal reasons such as: (best chance to bring back)
    - a. Lack of leadership
    - b. Message from the pulpit
    - c. Need more leadership positions
    - d. Too easy to join the church/need to get people more involved
    - e. Mad at someone
    - f. Etc.
- The local political climate was listed as one issue that might be affecting our membership, but we can't deny our corporate "soul" by giving up things many feel we are called to do. General Assembly actions were discussed in this context.
- Reflection of the larger culture - church is not as important to some people's lives as it once was.
- the economic downturn and NASA downsizing has affected our membership. The congregation is comprised of fairly well-educated people, older couples, and middle-aged with their kids grown and gone; not many young families.

## ***What are Ideas to Get Back or Retain Members?***

- Lots of personal contact to people who are not attending - cards, phone calls from people who know them
- Deacons keep track of and make personal contacts with members of their zones
- Engage new members in church activities and consciously keep them engaged. Children's program is a large part of people staying in the church. Having relevant, age-appropriate materials and activities is important. We need to worry about making disciples no numbers of church members.
- Children bring parents - have children's programs and activities to engage them, keep them involved in church, like VBS or Summer Spotlight
- Do something about the worship service times. No one seems happy with the schedule we currently are using. It makes things really difficult for the Sunday School classes.
- Services tend to run over the planned end time - conflicts with other schedules for families
- Continue with events like Fellowship Connection this summer - people came who had not been attending regularly
- Must have babysitting options for all scheduled church events, especially if parents are expecting it -- can be cancelled if no one needs a babysitter
- Events like Meet the Composer with other churches - get our name out there and get guests to visit our church
- Form a multi-church handyman group that goes around and fixes things in all the churches - build community among other churches and get people involved and engaged
- Need a dynamic, energized leader who takes the initiative to step out of the box, not just an administrator, more preacher interaction with the sick, aged, and committees, new visitors, Rotary, Lions, etc.
- Have a committee ranging in ages go out and visit the congregations that are attracting membership. The purpose is to see what they are doing that helps the church thrive and grow.
- To keep members from "burning out", we should be tapping into the membership outside of the usual "doers". Definitely ask within 6-9 months after someone has joined to get involved in some way.
- Reassess the programs of the church and what it takes to run them. Make sure we are not wearing folks thin when we would prefer an emphasis somewhere else.
- Create a small group for young parents.
- Need a renewed emphasis on Bible study
- Have a group meet periodically to discuss who might be moving into inactivity and need a contact. This group would include the pastors, select regular attendees of the two

services, a deacon rep, reps from the three nurture teams, and someone holding the worship pad info. This group would rotate on a fairly short time frame.

- Target individuals who are - having their first child, recently married, recently moved to the area, broad advertising (other than direct contact) will be mostly useless and a waste of money
- Don't try so hard to be not traditional. We want familiar songs and creeds we know, and familiar parts of the service.
- Do something to make the sanctuary warmer and more inviting. Looks kind of sterile. Maybe we need more art or pictures to show who we are.
- Get a go-between to coordinate/mediate Youth and Children's ministry. Need a strong Christian Nurture team.
- More fully utilize our Youth Minister, e.g. allow her to preach sermons on a rotational basis - like once a quarter. Better use her skills and allow her to grow.
- Mission activities for the whole family - like painting the mural, Crop Walk, etc.

## ***What are Ideas to Attract New Members?***

- Publicize events in local papers - articles, in directory,
- Increase presence in social media - Facebook, Twitter, Website, the sign
- Whole area has older families - we need to reach out to younger families through things like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, weddings, Mom's group (MOPS). Should not have to pay, need to be welcome with open arms.
- Need to have concerts, movie nights, bowling to attract youth
- Family night activities like bowling, movies, Covenant group (on Wednesday - when childcare is provided?). Maybe have a \$10 fee for babysitting.
- T-shirts increase visibility - when working in the community or out in groups, like the youth
- Strong music program draws people in - have concerts, recitals, youth musicals, etc.
- Let couples know they have babysitting for activities - safe place for their kids
- Improve signage (You are here signs) so new people will know where they are going
- Magnetic signs for vans/cars when on mission trips, youth activities, etc.
- Should not charge for Outreach events - like VBS
- More events to draw in the public - Free the Captives, Meet the Composer, Outside (and inside) choir concerts, Mother's Day Out program, MOPS program, after school tutoring
- Focus on special needs families. Childcare workers have special training in working with special needs children.
- Need a church-wide men's ministry
- Have dependable, supervised childcare for church events
- Get youth to invite their friends - very inclusive when bringing in their friends to things like the musical
- Have youth wear t-shirts, have water bottles, and Agape bags when out as a group (like playing Ultimate Frisbee in the park)
- Welcoming team has a process to address visitors and new members: Host - at door to provide first contact as members and visitors come to Service; Engage - go to visit them after they visit to make them feel welcome, give them WPC bag - also host the Open Door Classes; Connect - we match their interests with a service opportunity in the church; notice when guests return and try to reconnect with them that day, stop over and say "hi" again, invite them to Wholy Grounds, introduce them to someone else; visitor information entered into a database where they track how many times they have visited and other info including when they attend Open Door Class or join the church; Open Door held three times a year over 2 weeks during Sunday School hours, as well as new member receptions twice a year.

- Be present in community events - Welcome booth at Friendswood 4th of July Festival, ICU waiting room (St. John's), Midnight Madness (Youth)
- People comment that they saw the sign in the front
- Children's Ministry is the entry point for new members (families). Linda goes to the services and meets visiting families and tells them about our program.
- Summer Spotlight program for our members, but also enrichment for the neighborhood children.
- Covenant groups - these are talked about at the Open Door classes.
- Talk about our church in conversations outside the church; invite people to attend special events or services at church. Personal invitation is important.
- Jessie goes to Youth's extra-curricular events, wears her WPC shirt - being visible in their habitats
- Bring Your Friends to Church Day; group activities in public - Ultimate Frisbee
- Support the church financially and support the Youth program
- Ask if you can pick someone up and take them to church
- Brochures for Chamber of Commerce rack
- Door hangers
- Real estate Welcome Kits
- 50th Lunar Communion Celebration
  - a. Publicity
  - b. Lunar Festival
  - c. Science vs. Religion
  - d. Apostles of Apollo Book Signing
- People need to know that we are a "hub of the wheel" church. Our members come from all over the area - not just Webster. We are broad reaching - Pasadena, Alvin, Pearland, Friendswood, Seabrook, League City, Nassau Bay, Dickinson, Clear Lake, Kemah, and maybe others.

## What They Would Tell Us

This section represents an important companion to the previous section (How We Answered). Several references were suggested by WPC members as having potential input to the questions of the previous section. These references have been summarized with the intent to provide a format compatible with small group discussion. The information contained in these references is to help make sure that discussions about WPC membership is not only an inward-looking exercise but also has an outward-looking component. This section is built around a similar set of questions as the previous section:

- A. Suggestions of WPC Advantages
- B. Ideas to Explain Membership Trends
- C. Ideas to attract new members
- D. Ideas to address membership in general
- E. Suggestions for other references

However, since each reference may be speaking to a unique audience and with a different agenda, the summary of each applicable reference for each subsection will be maintained separately. A list of titles and short descriptions of each reference will be provided in the first two subsections to provide context.

## ***List of References***

1. *Ten-Year Trends*
2. *Why Millennials are Leaving the Church*
3. *Church, Here's Why People are Leaving You*
4. *PCUSA Decline in Churches, Members Continued in 2013*
5. *Downtown Churches Growing Younger*
6. Title Unknown in "For Church Leaders" *Presbyterian Outlook*, August 2014, page 23
7. *How do we let go of Sunday Morning*
8. *The Engaging Church*
9. *Leading Beyond the Walls*
10. *This Land of Strangers: The Relationship Crisis that Imperils Home, Work, Politics, and Faith*
11. *We Can Do That* (and other Transformational Church References)
12. *Growing Health Churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)*
13. *Beyond Bricks and Mortar*
14. *Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas*
15. *The Emergent Church*
16. *1001 Worshipping Communities*
17. *NeXT Church*
18. *Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation*
19. *The Apostles of Apollo*
20. *New Beginnings Assessment SlideShow*
21. *The Feminization of the Church*
22. *Why Men Hate Going to Church*
23. *The Little White Church on NASA Road 1*
24. *Many Churches Experiencing Decline*
25. *New Year's Resolutions for the Hospitable Church*

## ***Brief Description of References***

G1. ***New Beginnings Assessment Slideshow*** (Presentation attended by Helen Deleon, Pat Brackett, Michael Cooper, Mary Lawrence, and George James)

This is a program that allows churches to generate the data and internal discussion to feed major decisions related to the need to deal with significant change. The information included can be useful to the Membership Trends discussion, while the overall program is a potential action that the church might undertake.

R1: ***The Feminization of Church*** by Holly Privec, Biola Magazine, Spring 2006 (Suggested by Glenn and Geri Foster)

This article is found in the publication from a conservative university. The article entitled “The Feminization of the Church: Why Its Music and Messages, and Ministries are driving Men Away”. suggests that changes in Christianity over a long period of time that has made the church less appealing to men as it caters more to women. This change may have started as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century but really set in starting at the Industrial revolution. As a note, the discussion topic raised by this article is the question of whether gender balance in WPC membership and involvement is a reflection of such a larger historical trend.

<http://magazine.biola.edu/article/06-spring/the-feminization-of-the-church/>

R2. ***“Ten-Year Trends”*** On-line statistics from the PCUSA Website concerning Webster Presbyterian Church, (Suggested by George James/Gene Fisseler/Jimmy Spivey)

Last ten years of Total Membership, Total Gains and Losses, Worship Attendance, Christian Education Enrollment, Total Contributions, and Contributions per Person for Webster Presbyterian Church.3.

<http://apps.pcusa.org/tenyeartrends/report/8778/>

R3. ***“This Land of Strangers: The Relationship Crisis that Imperils Home, Work, Politics, and Faith”*** by Robert E. Hall (Suggested by George James)

“Relationships are collapsing. It is the crisis that everyone feels but that has gone unnamed. We see the pieces: families disintegrating; communities in chaos; businesses losing the trust of customers and employees; political and religious discourse that sows dysfunction and divide.”

R4. ***Why Men Hate Going to Church*** by David Murrow, (Referenced in The Feminization of the Church and presented at the 2007 Presbyterian Church (USA) Men’s Churchwide Gathering)

Christianity is the only world religion with a chronic shortage of men. David Murrow identifies the barriers to male participation, and explains why it’s so hard to motivate the men who do go to church. Then, he takes you inside several fast-growing congregations that are winning the hearts of men and boys.

R5. ***Why Millennials are Leaving the Church***, Rachel Held Evans (Suggested by Coco Motley)

Rachel Held Evans is an evangelical blogger and contributor to CNN. This is an article from her blog.

R6. ***Church, Here’s Why People are Leaving You***, Parts 1 & 2 (Suggested by Coco Motley)

A pair of article written from the standpoint of a relatively young person who is pointing out the issues of current day churches.

R7. ***PCUSA Decline in Churches, Members Continued in 2013*** by Michael Gryboski, Christian Post Reporter, June 2, 2014 (Suggested by Coco Motley)

The Presbyterian Church (USA) continued its years-long trend of losing congregations and members in 2013, according to statistics released by the mainline Protestant denomination last week.

R8. ***Downtown Churches Growing Younger***, (Suggested by Elizabeth Stoltz) Houston Chronicle August 15, 2014.

“The church that reaches out to younger urbanites needs to understand that they aren’t so worried about the style of worship as they are about the authenticity of life of people of the church.”

R9. Title Unknown – “***For Church Leaders***” *Presbyterian Outlook* August 2014 Issue page 23 by Earl S. Johnson Jr. (Suggested by Elizabeth Stoltz)

“The people want to know that the new pastor has a serious commitment to the congregation and is not in it for the short term.” This reference suggests that two questions should be asked by a new pastor: “What are you most proud of in your church?” and “What would you do to make it better?”.

R10. “***How do we let go of Sunday Morning***”, *Community, Congregational Transformation, Mainline Decline, Ministry, Mission*, June 25, 2014 by Rev. Mindi (Suggested by Helen DeLeon)

“Why are we so caught up on Sunday morning? Why is Sunday morning still the litmus test as to whether or not a church is healthy or viable?”

R11. “***The Engaging Church***”, One day Church Leadership Seminar, January 30, 2008, W. Charles Arn and Allen Ratta (Suggested by Carole Kloves)

How to attract outsiders, connect visitors, and integrate new members.

R12. “***Leading Beyond the Walls***”, by Adam Hamilton (Suggested by Michael Cooper)

“One of those crucial decisions was to make more traditional forms of worship and praise the center of the congregation's life. The result is that the example of Church of the Resurrection offers pastors and church leaders (especially those in mainline denominations) the realization that they need not completely change their liturgical and theological identity in order to reach out to the unchurched.”

R13. “***We Can Do That***”, Mike Cole, January 17, 2004 (and other Transformational Church References). (Suggested by George James)

At the Presbytery Officer Training in 2013, Mike Cole gave a presentation on the Transformational Church. It had a very clear list comparing the two different approaches for "doing church". There have been three unsuccessful attempts to get those slides. This represents an attempt to find materials to re create that information.

R14, “*Growing Healthy Churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*”, (Suggested by the WPC PNC)

A 2009 publication of the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). This volume of the series focuses on how the church might “grow.”

R15. “*Beyond Bricks and Mortar*” *Tearing Down the Walls* - A blog post requested by the NeXT Church initiative by Jessica Tate, December 6, 2013, (Suggested by Linda Smith-Gregory)

"They don't want church boxed into Sundays, limited to a building, quarantined from our daily lives. They don't want to see God's call for our lives as only what we get paid to do, but our entire life's work. They want to make a difference in their communities, and they see that as church. They want their church to be relevant in the world first."

R16. “*Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas*” John Roberto (Suggested by Linda Smith-Gregory)

An article from *Lifelong Faith* Fall 2010 – Theme of Children's Faith Formation. The focus of this article is to help convey how the iGeneration learns.

Note: The iGeneration includes early 30's down to elementary school kids

R17. *The Emergent Church*, Bruce Reyes-Chou (Suggested by Kevin Snowden)

The Emergent Church is an on-line church initiative within the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

“What if a church decided that the discipline of following Christ and building genuine Christian community could be lived out without everyone having to actually be in one place at one time?

What if a church unapologetically leveraged online tools to be a community no longer bound by architecture, time and physical proximity?

What if a church that met online believed that even a historic religious tradition like the Presbyterian Church (USA) can be expressed in new ways?

Essentially . . . can church be church when it is primarily lived and manifested online?”

Note: Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chou was Moderator of the 218th General Assembly

R18. ***1001 worshipping communities-*** Create 1001 new communities in a decade (Suggested by Helen Rose Moore)

This article speaks to a current initiative within and by the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

R19. ***NeXT Church*** (Suggested by Linda Smith-Gregory)

This information speaks to and on-going conversation about future directions that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) might need to be aware of. It offers the following descriptions of its mission: (a) sparking imaginations, (b) connecting congregations, (c) offering a distinctively Presbyterian witness to Jesus Christ, and (d) an ongoing conversation about the future of the Presbyterian church in the United States.

R20. ***Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation***

A summary of a current and on-going discussion happening in Christian Education by Linda Smith-Gregory, WPC Children's Ministry

R21. ***The Apostles of Apollo***, by C.L. Mersch (suggested by Pat Brackett)

This non-fiction book tells the story of Apollo 14 Astronaut Dr. Edgar D. Mitchell and the Rev. John M. Stout. Dr. Mitchell, the 6<sup>th</sup> astronaut to walk on the moon, took the first bible to its surface. Prior to the moon landing, the Rev. Stout formed the Apollo Prayer League, which eventually had over 30,000 members. The American Atheist Organization was active at the time, which created a national discussion. The Rev. Stout's group conducted a petition drive, leading to over 500,000 signatures nationally in support of Dr. Mitchell's quest. The Bible was taken to the surface of the moon, its pages microfilmed and all fitting on the surface the size of a large postage stamp, visible at 200 magnifications.

WPC is featured prominently in the book and it helps clarify the energy that existed in the congregation in the 1960's due to the Space Race.

**23. *The Little White Church on NASA Road 1*** by J. Alton, P. Brackett, and D. Ray, History of WPC from 1893-1993

This history can help add understanding to stages of church life that WPC has been though to provide perspective to the current situation.

**24. *Many Churches Experiencing Decline***, *The Wired Word*, September 28, 2014 (Suggested by Al Manson)

The reasons for membership decline in mainline protestant and evangelical churches are compared and contrasted.

**25. *New Year's Resolutions for the Hospitable***, (Suggested by Coco Motley), Posted on December 29, 2011 by Judith Gotwald

An article suggesting actions and data needed to make a church more "hospitable".

## ***Suggestions of WPC Advantages***

### G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program

After the workshop, the WPC participants were talking to Mary Marcotte. Her statement was that WPC was not a church that she initially thought of as a good candidate for this program. However, after we expressed an interest in she thought that WPC does like to do studies. Hence WPC might appreciate this program as it is not afraid to work to understand itself.

### R20: Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation

The author is the WPC Children's Ministry Director.

### R21: The Apostles of Apollo

Webster Presbyterian Church and several members are mentioned by name including the Lunar Communion.

### R22: The Little White Church on NASA Road 1

WPC has had a rich and colorful history.

## ***Ideas to Explain Membership Trends***

### R3: This Land of Strangers

The author makes the case that current trends in changing Christian populations has some explanation in the breakdown of relationships. As the percentage of Americans who identify themselves as Christians falls (in Catholic and Mainline Protestant denominations) the percentage of Americans who label themselves as unaffiliated (with church) grows.

There are three points that add insight into this trend. First, certain church and religious groups are growing suggest the qualities that are driving the changes: not religiously affiliated, not Christian, not with a mainline denomination, more conservative, more narrow-minded, or more outspoken. Second, Americans have become more open to ending and forming new religious relationships – hence they are more open to changing religious affiliations. Third, church attendance of Catholic and Mainline Churches has declined even as the population has grown and the number of people who report that they attend church has remained fairly constant.

The reported reasons provided for these trends for many Catholics and Mainline Protestants has been that they no longer believe in God or the religious teachings provided due to hypocrisy, judgmental attitudes, a leadership focus on money or power, or religious scandals. Hence the primary reasons appear to be reasons internal to the denominations not external forces.

The Additional Information section provides more extensive excerpts from the reference that drove this summary.

### R5: Why Millennials are leaving the Church

I'm often asked to speak to my fellow evangelical leaders about why millennials are leaving the church.

Armed with the [latest surveys](#), along with personal testimonies from friends and readers, I explain how young adults perceive evangelical Christianity to be too political, too exclusive, old-fashioned, unconcerned with social justice and hostile to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

I point to research that shows young evangelicals often feel they have to choose between their intellectual integrity and their faith, between science and Christianity, between compassion and holiness.

I talk about how the evangelical obsession with sex can make Christian living seem like little more than sticking to a list of rules, and how millennials long for faith communities in which they are safe asking tough questions and wrestling with doubt.

See Additional Information for complete blog.

#### R6: Church, Here's why People are leaving you

You *think* it's because "the culture" is so lost, so perverse, so beyond help that they are all walking away. You believe that they've turned a deaf ear to the voice of God; chasing money, and sex, and material things. You think that the gays and the Muslims and the Atheists and the pop stars have so screwed-up the morality of the world, that everyone is abandoning faith in droves. But those aren't the reasons people are leaving you.

- 1) *Your Sunday productions have worn thin.*
- 2) *You speak in a foreign tongue.*
- 3) *Your vision can't see past your building.*
- 4) *You choose lousy battles.*
- 5) *Your love doesn't look like love.*

If someone is frustrated, telling them that they're wrong to be frustrated is, well, pretty freakin' frustrating - *It only breeds distance.*

If someone shares that their heart is hurting, they don't want to hear that they're not right to be hurt - *It's a conversation-stopper.*

If someone tells you they are starving for compassion, and relationship, and authenticity, the last thing they need is to be corrected for that hunger - *It's a kick in the rear on the way out the door.*

Complete versions of both articles provided in Additional Information.

#### R7: PCUSA Decline in Churches, Members Continued in 2013

According to the [data compiled](#) by the PCUSA's Office of the General Assembly, by the end of 2013 membership was approximately 1.76 million, compared to approximately 1.84 million by the end of 2012.

Additionally, the number of PCUSA congregations decreased during 2013. There were 10,038 churches in 2013, versus 10,262 in 2012.

Of the 224 churches no longer with PCUSA, 148 of them were dismissed to other denominations while the remaining number were dissolved.

For the third straight year, the number of dismissed congregations increased, having been 21 in 2011, 110 in 2012, and 148 in 2013.

The Rev. Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the PCUSA General Assembly, said in a statement that he saw hope in the numbers, given that the overall decline was diminishing compared to previous years.

"Yes, the numbers reflect a decrease in active members in the denomination ... But the numbers also illustrate fewer losses than the previous year. The membership declined by 89,296 in 2013, compared to 102,791 in 2012," said Parsons.

According to the PCUSA General Assembly Mission Council, in 2000 the denomination had over 2.5 million members. Over the past decade the entire denomination lost over 20 percent of its membership.

In 2011, PCUSA membership fell below the 2 million mark, with the denomination experiencing a decline of 63,804 members and the loss of 96 congregations in that same year.

One of the causes of the declining number of congregations in the PCUSA was the creation of the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians, a theologically conservative body.

Formed in early 2012 in response to the PCUSA allowing for practicing homosexuals to be ordained as ministers, many of the congregations dismissed from the PCUSA have proceeded to seek affiliation with the ECO.

Congregations that have recently left for the ECO have included the 4,000-member Highland Park Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the 3,500-plus member Menlo Park Presbyterian Church of California.

By the end of 2013, the ECO had its hundredth congregation join the Reformed body, and will hold its 2014 National Gathering in Dallas, Texas, come August.

Complete article provided in Additional Information.

R10: How do we let go of Sunday Morning

Why are we so caught up on Sunday morning? Why is Sunday morning still the litmus test as to whether or not a church is healthy or viable?

This article is considering the idea of moving away from a traditional Sunday morning focus.

Trends suggested as happening now in the church as a whole:

- A. Offered giving options - on-line, card readers, QR-Codes, etc.
- B. Encouraged giving at other times and functions
- C. Sold the buildings, partnered with other congregations, started meeting in other public spaces

- D. Pledge time and talents as well as finances
- E. Encourage pastors to have shared incomes
- F. Seminary students have to work full-time and take classes part-time

The point is made that these are actions to consider as well as changes underway.

The entire article is provided in Additional Information.

R13: We Can Do That

<b>Modernity</b> (began with the Enlightenment)	<b>Postmodernity</b> (began in the later half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century)
Meaning from external authority	Meaning is not from an external authority.
Truth exists.	Suspicion of anyone with notions of truth.
Concerned with “Is it true?”	Concerned with “If I hold this particular belief, how may it interact with someone who holds a quite different belief.” “How can we get along together?” Truth is not nearly as important as, “Does it work for you?”
Principles discovered apply at all times	The process of observing affects what is observed so there is less objectivity.
Right and wrong is determined by timeless and unchanging standards.	Situational contexts determine what is right and wrong.
Accepts the authority of a metanarrative [such as Scripture]	Rejects the metanarrative as a means of validating what is true. Self-referential in that one’s own self is the primary determiner of that which is helpful and meaningful.
Asks, “Is the thinking right?”	Asks, “Is it helpful?”
Focuses on the message.	Focuses on the experience.
Focuses on the individual and God (“I”).	Focuses on the role of the community that shapes our identity and our identity with the on-going story of the people of God.

R14: Growing Healthy Churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

According to the latest Comparative Statistics(2006) issued by Research Services of the PC(USA), we have 447 congregations with 800 members or more, and 7,716 congregations with 200 members or less. There can be no doubt that the PC(USA) is primarily a denomination of

small congregations that are getting smaller. In the decade between 1995 and 2005, the PC(USA) lost 13 percent of its membership (among mainline denominations, only the percentage loss in the UCC was greater) compared to an increase of 21 percent in the Assemblies of God.

The continuing health of the congregation depends on several factors: a commitment to excellence, a commitment to mission, a competent staff, and freedom to do the job. There is no room for the micromanaging: the head of staff must continue to seek the vision and dream the dream, and articulate that vision.

#### R15: Beyond Bricks and Mortar

In her Human Resource Magazine article “Mixing It Up,” Adrienne Fox reminds us that Millennials are optimistic. They love collaboration and consensus building. Some believe Millennials view power as organic – it grows when shared. Churches and seminaries are finding it challenging to connect with Millennials with their existing models. Millennials grew up watching religious extremism lead to 9-11. They watched sexual scandals covered up in multiple faiths and denominations, the co-opting of the religious right by republican politicians and infighting in mainline protestant denominations. Young people are skeptical of a church that stays locked up away from the world. Diana Butler Bass in *Christianity After Religion* tells us that young people want the old church order of believing, behaving, belonging to shift to the ancient approach of belonging, behaving, believing. They want churches to be counter-cultural prophetic voices relevant to the world. They want societal transformation. The networks are interconnected and dependent on each other. The walls are coming down.

#### R16: Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas

From the article:

Research makes it clear that the generation of children in our ministries today is vastly different than any other group of children the Church has sought to reach. They engage and edit media, experiment with culture, and experience community in new ways. They are fluent in the language of technology. They collaborate, teach, connect, and relate using a network of individualized digital tools. They prefer a unique learning experience with parallel processing, multitasking, feedback, and relevance. They navigate the digital world deftly and quickly. They blur the lines between the physical and virtual. They are open to the truth of God’s Word.

It is clear that this generation is fundamentally different than any generation that the Church has ever faced. This generation requires agile leadership, renewed teaching and learning processes, openness to change, and creative resources. Such change will bring about a completely rewired children’s ministry, poised to connect children to the community of faith, teach children the truth of God’s Word, and help children grow in relationship with God.

R17: The Emergent Church

For generations the idea of “church” has been bound by proximity, physical structures and time. Sure, many have been creative within these bounds, but most have nevertheless been limited by them. The past 10+ years has also seen the increased influence of social media on culture that has created profound opportunities for people to engage the breadth of the human experience and find genuine community. Many churches have found ways to integrate the use of social media into congregational life, but most are centered around the idea that the community begins at one central location and that particular experience is amplified by the use of social media. For a while now I have had an inkling that the “social media amplifies the local church” paradigm could be flipped upside-down resulting in a powerful way to be church.

R21: The Apostles of Apollo

This book includes historical information about WPC during the early space program. When read in light of the typical church trends suggested by the New Beginnings Assessment Program presentation (G1), it may help explain how WPC was reinvigorated and survived past the typical lifetime of a church. This train of thought might help explain the current state of WPC.

R22: The Little White Church on NASA Road 1

This history book was included as it may shed light on WPC past. When read in light of the trends suggested in the New Beginnings Assessment Program presentation (G1), it may help explain how WPC progressed through its first several decades and was reinvigorated to survive past the typical lifetime of a church. This train of thought might help explain the current state of WPC.

R23: Many Churches Experiencing Decline

.Excerpts:

" He points out that collectively, mainline denominations are down from their 1965 peak by more than 42 percent, and "two-thirds below the level they could have been if they had simply kept growing with the population."

"Dickerson sees a similar downtrend in evangelical churches. He says that evangelicals have an inflated view of their numbers, influence and financial stability."

"He further says that evangelical churches are "bleeding out young people," a problem common in mainline groups as well."

" Among the reasons usually mentioned for the downward trend in churches is the growth in the number of younger people who now identify themselves as "nones" -- that is, having no religion -- or who say they are "spiritual but not religious." Another reason is public dislike of social positions some evangelical groups have taken. But mainline churches that have embraced different positions have also experienced decline. Other reasons include cultural changes, increased religious pluralism, growing secularity, a more aggressive atheism, more competition from other activities, the perception of many that the church is irrelevant to their lives, church splits and more."

"In his article, Ehrich said, "Local congregations are still doing mission and ministry in ways that don't work but are difficult to change." Three specific "ways that don't work" he named are Sunday worship, facilities designed primarily for large-group worship and congregations that face inward instead of outward." "

"Dickerson has a different diagnosis concerning problems in evangelical Christianity and offers different solutions."

"Dickerson sees the main problem not merely as a decline in numbers so much as a decline in faithfulness to the church's mission of proclaiming the gospel. He does not look for structural change as a path to improvement, but a change of heart and an evangelical movement defined not by "whom we oppose" but by "grace and truth." "

The full article is provided under Additional Information

## ***Ideas to Attract New Members***

### R1: The Feminization of the Church

To reach men, churches should stress the cost and dangers of following Christ — including Christians' conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil. Yet, men should be reminded that the sacrifice won't always be a "huge, glorious display like William Wallace stepping out on a battlefield. Many times it will be staying in a troubled marriage, raising a handicapped child, or working a hated job to provide for a family.

The church needs strong, masculine leadership because men follow men. He said Jesus' disciples are a prime example of this principle. Bold leadership attracts men. But even more attractive than a dynamic pastor is the sight of men in the pews who are true followers of Jesus Christ. However, if the church doesn't have enough strong male influence, that's not a reason for men to stop going, but a great reason for them to go.

Example: involve men through an automotive ministry that takes donated vehicles, fixes them, and gives them to single mothers and the working poor. A side benefit is that men develop friendships with other men in the context of doing things together, which is more natural for them than sitting in a circle talking — the typical church format.

Idea: Social justice ministries — that allow men to use their skills to help the weak and provide interaction with business and politics — are especially appealing to men.

Idea: Mission trips are exciting for many men in his church because they offer challenge, adventure and specific goals - like construction projects, where they can get their hands dirty and see a finished project in the end.

### R4: Why Men Hate Going to Church

On page 134, the author sums up one of his basic premises as "Men are Miracle-Gro for a church."

One of the main themes of the book is that if the congregational culture becomes more man-friendly and places value on the attributes that men offer, then the church will grow and financial stability will follow. Furthermore, this book is constantly focused on the fact that such changes are local in nature (in other words driven by the local congregation and not by Christian society as a whole).

#### R8: Downtown Churches Growing Younger

- A. Young urbanites want authenticity, well planned worship, a sense of community, active involvement in spiritual formation and social justice.
- B. Wednesday night events with outside speakers such as business and science
- B. They aren't as worried about style of worship music
- D. Example is active involvement in mission to the homeless
- E. Bible study

Additional Information provides more context.

#### R11: The Engaging Church

Retention focus should be on discipleship - making disciples and persuading them to become responsible members.

- Church priority should be making disciples,
- Meeting people where they are,
- Church that focus on relationships not programs
- Growing church pastors spend more time outside, in the world, than in the church.

Church identity and outreach into the community are important - our outside image reflects our current identity - use professional full-color materials.

Visitors need to see a sense of relevance, a sense of need, and a sense of belonging.

#### R12: Leading Beyond the Walls

Hamilton states there are more unchurched believers than nonbelievers. He reaches them by focusing on *listening* rather than doing things for them. Christ set the example as a shepherd/leader. In the crowds, he saw each person and had compassion for each person, not as a mass of humanity, but individuals, each one loved by God.

He focuses on building relationships with the unchurched, and care for those hurting. He meets them in their space, their time through civic clubs, volunteer opportunities, etc. The congregation is comprised of individuals from all walks of life, including prisons, addictions, and poor decision-making. Each person is accepted where they are, and are encouraged to worship and re-form their lives through the caring worship community.

R14: Growing Healthy Churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The key trait is very simple: intentionality, an overt and tangible intention that the congregation truly wants to grow.

The pastor and the pastoral staff set the tone of congregational hospitality.

- Do the pastors smile?
- Is body language inviting, warm, engaging, energetic, and enthusiastic?
- Are worship leaders in a hurry to leave the sanctuary following worship?
- Do the pastors remember names and faces?
- Do they recognize new faces and visitors?
- Does the pastoral staff meet and greet worshippers as they arrive and leave services?

The worship bulletin tells much about the life of the church.

- Does the bulletin look professional and clear?
- Are announcements inviting to insiders and to outsiders as well?
- With the advances in word processing, there is absolutely no excuse for a church not to have attractive publications.
- From reading the bulletin, is there a sense that many activities are taking place in the life of this congregation?
- Is it easy to follow the bulletin?
- Are visitors openly welcomed and offered “a way in”?

Confident worship leaders convey a sense of direction and peace in their leadership.

- Worship environment that is relaxed and yet filled with anticipation and expectation for worshippers.
- A solid sermon feeds souls and attracts and sustains both “the flock” and visitors.
- A good sermon offers both the challenge and comfort of the gospel.
- Preparation is part of hospitality.
- An effective sermon speaks to people at a variety of levels. In the busy lives people lead today, they do not need to be held captive to a rambling, wandering preacher (in fact, most won't return if this characterizes a pastor's sermons).
- What a preacher needs to do is to demonstrate an honest wrestling with a text, which gives the congregation something to think about and reflect upon in the week ahead.

My observations would suggest that the quality of the music should be the first priority, rather than the style.

- Well-performed music speaks to the soul of the worshipper and can attract new members.
- Offer several options for music in worship, creating an environment that honors the traditions of the traditionalists and encourages the participation of those who feel more comfortable with contemporary options.
- There is no longer one-size-fits-all in terms of music.

Worship is not a “spectator sport” and too many churches have limited opportunities for worshippers to be engaged in the service itself. Litanies, lay leadership in leading the service, participation in announcements, sharing prayer concerns, and greetings are ways that involve worshippers in worship to a greater degree.

The condition of the facilities is a telling aspect of congregational priorities and health.

- When was the last time the sanctuary was painted?
- Is the parlor decorated with “hand-me-downs” from parishioners, bouquets of dusty silk flower arrangements, or artwork that both amuses and depresses onlookers?
- Is signage updated and clear? Do visitors know where to find a church office, let alone the sanctuary? An uninviting and confusing entrance often deters those who want to come in.

What accommodations does the church make for babies and young children?

- Parents today are reluctant to drop off their young children at a “tired” church nursery.
- Is the nursery staff pleasant?
- Have they been screened and trained?
- Can parents stay with their young ones in a crying room?
- Do young families feel welcome and included?
- Are there clear directions for communication with parents?
- Are the children safe in the church environment?

Is the church involved in the community?

- Does the congregation appear to be a “can do” group?
- The bulletin should indicate participation in the community at large through outreach or mission.
- The local newspaper should sport articles that regularly advertise classes, music, special services, mission outreach, and descriptions of what goes on and who might participate.

Is the facility accessible and inviting?

Perhaps the most important area for church growth is the treatment of visitors.

- Does the church have greeters charged to specifically seek out visitors and make them feel welcomed?

- Some churches ask that all members take on this responsibility.
- What kind of follow-up takes place? Are cards sent and phone calls made every week? Church growth experts suggest that visitors should be called within 24 hours of a visit, and preferably, that call should come from the pastoral staff.
- At minimum, a letter or card should be sent to all visitors. The message should be, “We noticed that you were here, we are glad that you came, and we hope you’ll come back.” A personal signature and greeting are keys to making the postcard work, but nothing has more impact than a phone call from a pastor. In an informal survey among prospective new members, not one person cited the postcard as the draw to join.
- Does your church have a documented strategy for meeting and greeting visitors?
- Are there individuals who consistently make sure that strategy is followed?
- Do visitors receive any communication from the church after they have visited?
- Is the follow-up a telephone call, a personal note, or a form letter?
- Are new members surveyed about how they came to join the church?
- Do visitors receive follow-up phone calls from the pastor or committee members of the church?
- Does your worship bulletin specifically welcome visitors?
- Is there a committee in your congregation specifically charged with new member recruitment?
- Are visitors welcomed within the context of your worship services?
- Are your new member classes “user-friendly”? — i.e., When are the classes offered? Is childcare provided during the classes?
- When entering your church facilities, would a visitor easily know where to go to find the church office, pastor’s study, fellowship hall, etc.?
- Is the membership of the church enthusiastically committed to welcoming new members into its midst?
- If you have a coffee hour on Sunday mornings, are visitors encouraged to attend? Would they know where to go? Do members have an assigned job?

Ask some questions to get your community of faith thinking about growth. Until a congregation becomes committed to the idea of growth, which also means change, it probably will not occur. Everyone in the church — pastors, staff, and members—needs to view growth as a positive and important priority in the life and ministry of the church to look for visitors and shepherd them?

Visit other churches in your area that are growing. See what you can learn from observing their services and programs.

- Consider having several “Bring a Friend to Church” Sundays throughout the year. Make these dates special times of fellowship, community, and outreach. Evangelism can and must become contagious!
- Consider sending out ZIP code mailings for special service dates — i.e., special music presentations, youth Sundays, special services during Lent and Advent, renewal events for marriages, special speakers, or musical groups, and opportunities for involvement of children.

- Every member is an evangelist. Everyone in the church family should be thinking about ways in which to welcome others into the fellowship of the church.

Hospitality and intentionality are at the core of a welcoming and growing faith community. It is time to put the Presbyterian Church and its historic witness in the world back on the map.

#### R18: 1001 worshipping communities

The primary website shows that this is an initiative of the PCUSA focusing on three verbs: Inspire, Connect, and Equip. It is an online forum with usable tools designed to provide blog space and sharing of new ministry attempts which are striving to transform church and worship from the traditional (building, weekly services, etc) into church and worship and faith integrated in the community – through movements and grassroot initiatives. The website provides an online platform with a lot of online tools for use by budding churches.

#### R19: NeXT Church

The primary website suggests that this is a PCUSA website for currently existing ministries involved in adapting and pursuing bold initiatives in their community. It provides seminars (regional, national), and an online forum to share information, resources, ideas, and especially on integrating technology in their ministry. A scan of their google map shows the website is especially linked with racial-ethnic congregations.

#### R24: Resolutions for a Hospitable Church

- Americans have become suspicious and xenophobic. We live in a world that recommends background checks and fosters credit checks for simplest of reasons. These attitudes are bound to manifest in church life.
- If visitors to your church leave feeling they were wallflowers, observers of friendliness, it is not hospitality. We think this is an area of church life that needs to be addressed.

This church group visited 38 churches in an 18 month period. This is what they observed:

- Gauntlet of greeters do little more than hand you a bulletin..
- Pastor disappeared after the service and did not greet people at the door.
- Pastor was present in the fellowship area but stood along the wall and waited for people to come to him/her.

- Some seemed to have fellowship going on somewhere else in the building. The congregation disappeared quickly after worship, failing to invite us to join. In many cases, people walked by in the narthex and never made eye contact. In one instance, when we approached them and asked a simple question such as the location of a restroom, they responded, “Oh, we thought you knew someone here” or “We thought you were here for the baptism.” Assumptions block hospitality.

Here are a few efforts we remember and appreciated as visitors:

- When a pastor personally invited us to fellowship, accompanied us and introduced us to a few people (one church visit).
- When a pastor asked if he could meet with us sometime during the week (one church visit).
- When a member took the time to give us a tour of their church and told us something of their history (three church visits).
- When a lay member sent us a handwritten thank you note for our visit (one church visit).
- When a member sat next to us and pointed things out in the bulletin (one church visit).
- When we left knowing at least one member’s name (a few times).
- When members of a church offered to help us (more than just pray) and followed through (three church visits).
- When a member engaged us in extensive conversation that was about us as much as about them (six visits).
- When congregation members prompted the worship leader to introduce visitors (two visits).
- When a pastor asked us to join their congregation (one church visit).

## ***Ideas to address membership in general***

### G1: New Beginnings Assessment Program

The New Beginnings Assessment has four steps:

1. A one day assessment visit;
2. A Friday/Saturday Leader Training;
3. Six weeks of house meetings; and
4. A bold decision making process that will take an indeterminate amount of time.

The one day assessment includes a one hour property tour, a one hour windshield tour, a 45 min meeting the financial officers, a discussion about the church calendar, a dinner with the pastor and one or two lay leaders, and an inquiry session with the congregation.

The leader training is a weekend retreat with other congregations in the area going through the program. It is interesting to note that the session beginning in early 2015 will be the first one where churches of all three denominations will be going through the program together. This training is for 8-12 lay leaders. A review of the assessment report is performed. There is also training for small group meetings and a chance to network with other church leaders.

The house meetings involve at least 50% of the congregation and are small group meetings led by the trained lay leaders. This six week process is targeted to leading the church to make a bold decision about the future of the church.

The entire process takes from 4 to 6 months, although implementing the bold decision may take an indeterminate amount of time. Examples of bold decisions that other churches in the program made include: embracing entirely new missions and congregants, selling property and moving the church, starting a new congregation while allowing the current congregation to die peacefully in place, closing the church, etc.

### R1: The Feminization of the Church

So, what will it take to get men into church?

They need to see the greater purpose — their role in the advancing the kingdom of God.

The reason younger churches typically have more men than older churches may be because more of men's gifts — like vision casting and risk taking — are needed until a church becomes settled.

Churches should engage men's intellects to help them see the relevance of Christianity to the "real" world of politics, industry and business.

Men are more attracted to religion if it presented as a quest, an adventure, a heroic exploit. They want something challenging, bracing, and demanding. The gospel that Jesus and Paul preached is revolutionary, and it's worth giving your life to. But part of the reason guys aren't involved is that we've sold them a milquetoast gospel. We don't paint it as big enough — or God as awesome enough — to be compelling.

Also, many church service opportunities are geared for women — like working in the nursery, teaching children, cooking and hospitality. So, many men feel their options are limited to ushering, directing parking, or sitting on a committee — activities that might not allow them to use their skills or challenge them.

When men can't contribute, they feel worthless. Once they feel discouraged, they pull back and disconnect.

Even professionals who join church committees, like a building or finance committee, often complain that the skills they contribute to the corporate world — like taking risks, making hard decisions, and thinking outside the box — aren't welcome in many churches, whose governing boards tend to play it safe. As a result, less gets accomplished, which can be frustrating to men who are results-driven.

We have to recover the notion that Christianity is true on all levels, not just for your emotional life or repairing relationships, as important as those things are.

Men want to expend their lives for a great cause, even if it involves risk.

Once you start attracting a man's full heart, soul, mind and strength — and he sees that there are ways he can use all those in the church — then we're going to start seeing a turnaround of the absent man.

### R3: This Land of Strangers

The author suggests that the key to driving society changes to strengthen relationships and reverse the results of the loss of relationship are changes that begin with individuals and local levels. The author suggests three priorities: (1) revaluing relationships, (2) reclaiming small and local, and (3) embracing relational leadership.

*Revaluing relationships* involves individuals strengthening, finding value in, and broadening the scope of our personal relationships including those that disagree with us. The author provides a metric that is labelled *relational capacity* to cover the level to which an organization or group is able to value, grow, and utilize relationships. A follow-on point is that groups with higher relational capacity can solve more and larger problems with more efficient use of resources and less collateral damage than if relational capacity is less.

*Reclaiming small and local* involves making a dedicated effort to seek out ways to enable, enhance, and utilize situations where relationships are exercised. This approach is most easily seen as seeking out small and local solutions to problems and situations that might also be handled with a big impersonal solution.

*Embracing relational leadership* involves seeking out and exercising leadership that enhances the advantages of functional relationships within an organization or group. The properties to look for include *relational purpose, servant leadership, and leading that invites and engages*. The author expands on the last property to provide four key aspects of engaged leadership: engage failure constructively, foster bottom-up innovation and change, productively engage doubt, and secure peer commitment and accountability.

See Additional Information for excerpts from the reference that provide expanded details.

#### R4: Why Men Hate Going to Church

The last chapter starting on page 20 is a reasonable summary of the proposed changes that a church might make to bring back men. The example used is from a small 150 year old Methodist church with a woman pastor. The changes this church implemented included:

- Changing the language of the sermons to include metaphors that men can understand;
- Changing the decor to something men could more easily appreciate;
- Men were put to work making major modifications in the facilities;
- Expanding the use of technology;
- Add in songs with masculine lyrics;
- Add humor to the sermons;
- Use more male-friendly images on the projections;
- A male focus group was used to add in programming that targets the men;
- Deliver sermons that can be understood by men; and
- Keep to an hour long service.

The author reports that the church has begun having more men than women in the services and the women appreciate it as their husbands and sons want to come to church or there are more single men.

Another theme of the book is that as father's become more involved, the children tend to stay engaged in church later in life.

#### R5: Why Millennials are leaving the Church

The author is speaking to leaders of Evangelical Christianity about why millennials are leaving those churches - "But I would encourage church leaders eager to win millennials back to sit down and really talk with them about what they're looking for and what they would like to contribute to a faith community." .

See Additional Information for entire blog.

#### R6: Church, Here's why People are leaving you

Until you can give us something more than a Christian-themed performance piece; something that allows us space and breath and conversation and relationship, many of us are going to sleep-in and stay away.

Talk to them plainly about love, and joy, and forgiveness, and death, and peace, and God, and they'll be all ears. Keep up the church-speak, and you'll be talking to an empty room soon.

Your greatest mission field is just a few miles, (or a few feet) off your campus and you don't even realize it. You wanna reach the people you're missing? Leave the building.

Church, we need you to stop being warmongers with the trivial, and pacifists in the face of the terrible.

From what we know about Jesus, we *think* he looks like love. The unfortunate thing is, you don't look much like him. Show us that your love and your God are real.

So yes, Church, even if *you're* right, even if *we're* totally wrong; even if *we're* all petty, and self-centered, and hypocritical, and critical, and (I'll say it), "sinful", *we're* still the ones searching for a place where we can be known and belong; a place where it feels like God lives, and *you're* the ones who can show it to us. Even if the problem *is* me, it's *me* who you're supposed to be reaching, Church. So, for the love of God; reach already.

Complete versions of both articles provided in Additional Information.

#### R7: PCUSA Decline in Churches, Members Continued in 2013

Regarding the 2011 numbers, Stated Clerk Parsons released a statement saying that there were two major challenges before the Presbyterian denomination to reverse the losses.

"The first and primary need is to continue to increase our efforts to live out the Great Commission and share the good news of Jesus Christ," [said Parsons in 2011](#). "The second is to connect with the growing number of the 'Spiritual But Not Religious.'"

For its part, the PCUSA has launched efforts to counter its membership and congregation declines. One such endeavor, the 1001 Movement, seeks to plant over 1,000 new worshipping communities over the next decade.

Already 200 new communities have been initiated under the movement, which given their status of not being official congregations yet means they were not counted in the 2013 statistics.

Complete article provided in Additional Information.

#### R8: Downtown Churches Growing Younger

The church that reaches out to younger urbanites needs to understand that they aren't so worried about the style of worship as they are about the authenticity of life of people of the church.

Additional Information contains context.

#### R9: For Church Leaders

The people want to know that the new pastor has a serious commitment to the congregation and is not in it for the short term.

Questions a new pastor might ask parishioners: What are you most proud of in your church? and What would you do to make it better? Answers can be reported back to the session and the congregations and become building blocks to develop major goals for the next few years.

Additional Information contains context.

#### R10: How do we let go of Sunday Morning

Ideas suggested if change from a Sunday-only focus:

- A. Offered giving options - on-line, card readers, QR-Codes, etc.
- B. Encouraged giving at other times and functions
- C. Sold the buildings, partnered with other congregations, started meeting in other public spaces
- D. Pledge time and talents as well as finances
- E. Encourage pastors to have shared incomes

F. Seminary students have to work full-time and take classes part-time

The point is made that these changes are already happening and are thus trends as well as actions.

The entire article is included in Additional Information.

R13: We Can Do That

	Traditional	Transitional	Transformational
Pastor	The pastor is the primary doer of ministry – central preacher, leader, caregiver. Presence expected in most meetings.	both	The pastor is the primary leader and one of the central preachers. The pastor remains a caregiver in certain situations. Most care has shifted to the people.
Worship	Traditional worship services feature classical and traditional church music, church choirs, and traditional vestments as well as the particular liturgical elements of the individual church’s tradition.	both	In transformational congregations, a variety of worship styles may be found, including the traditional, the contemporary service and the blended service
Christian Education	Classes	both	Small groups and classes
People	Sunday worship attendance and participation in programs – typically on a low-commitment basis (Schaller).	both	Worship attendance and participation in small groups on a high commitment basis. Involvement in programs on an “as interested” basis.

People's ministry	Serve on ruling board (Session, Vestry, Council, Deacons) and committees. Some teach, usher, handle a variety of tasks. Most members have no formal ministry at any given time.	both	Ministry as lifestyle. The use of spiritual gifts and a servant heart inside and outside the church. Service within the congregation plus the understanding all of us have been "sent" in all humility to do ministry in every place and at all times.
Governance	The ruling board members set policy and lead programs. Emphasis on control.  Committees	both	The Central Ministry Team or Board members identify core purpose and care principles of ministry. Emphasis on "permission-giving" – endorsing proposals consistent with purpose and principles.  Ministry Teams

R14: Growing Healthy Churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Evangelism is not the exclusive domain of the pastor, although the pastor should set the tone and model the ways in which members should reach out to others who are not a part of the church community. Every member is an evangelist. Everyone in the church family should be thinking about ways in which to welcome others into the fellowship of the church. Hospitality and intentionality are at the core of a welcoming and growing faith community. It is time to put the Presbyterian Church and its historic witness in the world back on the map.

Perhaps the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) needs to learn from other marketing approaches. The church must make a dramatic paradigm shift, because it is no longer a place where one can go to simply feel comfortable being with other Presbyterians. The church needs to be a place where its members are faithful to the calling of Christ in their lives and ministry. We Presbyterians must become a church that is relevant, offering better spiritual health for those both inside and outside of the church walls.

How does a church capture God's vision for tomorrow?

- **Know thy context!** Every church must ask God how to apply its specific ministry to its specific context in order to identify discernment. Every church

must understand the context or the unique landscape where God has placed it, and every church must discern the direction God calls them to follow.

- **Leadership and prayer** comprise the next growth factors. God's own agenda depends on the effectiveness, teamwork, and spirituality of the leadership. Within the session meetings of growing congregations, prayer and reliance upon God are very evident, along with genuine mutual respect and collaboration. Leaders work together passionately for Christ. In churches with healthy leadership teams, prayer becomes an essential, not a supplemental, part of ministry. Groups that pray make God the source of strength, the wise guidance to make decisions, and the place that meets the needs of others. We must hand ourselves over to God in clear-headed, accountable, non-naïve prayer. We need to rely as much on God for programmatic guidance as we can stand! Without God vividly in the mix, we drift, life declines.

- **Connection**, which includes multiculturalism, is the third factor in church growth. The growth of any congregation means getting beyond the warm and fuzzy feelings of knowing everyone and urging them to meet someone new. Many people come to churches out of loneliness and a need to connect. Growing churches reach out to meet those in need.

The Evangelism and Church Growth ministry equip, empower, and inspire individuals, congregations, and governing bodies to share their personal faith in Christ and to become connected to a community of faith. If the church could see this important evangelistic aspect of our faith, we could change the declining landscape of our church and reverse the trend of decline. By embracing this challenge, we may restore the health — and future — of our church.

These four ingredients — vision, target, leadership, and prayer—are as essential to the church as sun, soil, and water are to a plant

Ministries that meet people's needs are like a moth to a flame. When the church meets peoples' needs, it must fight to keep them away!

When worship attendance reaches and exceeds 800, the important milestone of "critical mass" has been reached. Such congregations have the numbers and the budget to introduce a wide variety of programs and to hire the requisite staff. Worship services with different styles and innovative programs can be offered. Additionally, outreach ministries and missions can be staffed and funded.

The key to congregational support is to let them worship God and not the pastor.

Some of the denomination's larger churches are in danger of becoming "beached whales." They are endangered because many of their members are unaware of or choose to ignore the changing culture.

Training and developing leadership is the next hurdle. Can members be equipped to do ministry? Gift identification is one criterion. Getting the right people in the right jobs is a critical component of leadership.

#### R15: Beyond Bricks and Mortar

“A former student of mine works for an e-commerce start up company whose office is in an old church in Minneapolis. He shares the church office space with his co-workers – a priest who got into real estate to make ends meet and a man who started a grain-based veggie burger business. The church started renting its space out during the week to small businesses for the financial benefit of everyone. This worship space/business office collaboration makes sense. Being some of the biggest community spaces in the neighborhood, churches can engage in a ministry of shared space. Sharing becomes not only a creative, mutually symbiotic idea, but in some cases a financial necessity. Boundaries that used to separate church and life are blurring.”

#### R16: Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas

1. Digital learners prefer receiving information quickly from multiple multimedia sources
2. Digital Learners prefer parallel processing and multitasking
3. Digital learners prefer processing pictures, sounds, color, and video before text
4. Digital learners prefer random access to hyperlinked multimedia information.
5. Digital learners prefer to network simultaneously with many others
6. Digital learners prefer learning “just in time”
7. Digital learners prefer instant gratification with immediate and deferred rewards
8. Digital learners prefer learning that is relevant, active, instantly useful, and fun.
9. Learning Experiences
  - a. Multiple intelligences
  - b. Learning styles
  - c. Active in-depth learning
  - d. Project-based learning
  - e. Collaborative learning
  - f. Practicing and performing
  - g. Visual literacy

#### R17: The Emergent Church

At this early stage it is tempting to come out launching a high-functioning and slick “product,” but we realize that if this is to truly be a church and not just a dispenser of religious services, the final mission,

vision, form and function must be formed and owned by the community. At the same time, I know that some will need to know a little more before deciding whether or not to get involved. So to give a taste, here is a little bit of what I am thinking in terms of initial focus and tone . . .

Spiritual and Religious – This is not just about getting together and being Christians in isolation who randomly connect online, but about developing disciplines that help us to grow into who God intends.

Gracious and Progressive – While spirited theological and political disagreement will be welcomed, stridency and rigidity is not how we will approach difficult issues. We will be a church that will live under the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA): ones sexual orientation or gender are not barriers to leadership, reproductive options are important, capital punishment should be abolished, etc.

Reformed and Presbyterian – Reformed and always reforming according to the Word of God is central to our ongoing search for God’s intentions for each of us. As we seek to know the will of God and mind of Christ, we do so honoring all voices, no matter how small.

Open and Sourced – While all people who are part of this community are ministers in their own right, we also know that some roles will require particular gifts and skills. The life of the community will move along with a collaborative spirit, but leadership will also be tasked with guiding and shaping the process in a way that moves forward. The circle will definitely widen, but the initial leadership team is currently made up of: [Katie Mulligan](#), Teaching Elder, NJ; [Stephen Salyards](#), Ruling Elder, CA; [Mihee Kim-Kort](#), Teaching Elder, IN; [Derrick Weston](#), Teaching Elder, OH; [Jack Jenkins](#), Seminary Student, MA; Jennifer Owen Walsh, NC and myself, Teaching Elder in CA. [Delayed add since Bridgett Green, Teaching Elder and PhD Candidate, TN]

Inward and Outward . . . but mostly outward – This is not about building up a crazy number of followers, friends or likes. This is about creating community that finds healing, discipline and love SO that we get the heck out into the world and do some good. From our tent-making pastoral leadership to our programs to our finances the outward nature of this community will be self-evident.

. . . and this is where we do it all through the lens of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

#### R20: Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation

- Faith formation happens in many ways and venues. It is not limited to Sunday school or worship, although they are important parts of our faith journey. We need to have more touch points with experiences and relationships that will help our faith to grow. These things may not happen on Sunday or even at 201 W NASA Parkway. We already have many of these touch points. small groups, choir, teams, mission, and more are part of our faith journey. But there are important times, call them milestones, that seem to pass by when they should be marked as important parts of our faith journey, both as individuals and as a community.

- A milestone is a meaningful, memorable moment in the lives of individuals and communities. Our faith milestones are markers along life's journey that say, "This is something important, and God is here, too." It is a faith formation practice for both home and congregation that helps all generations recognize God's presence in everyday life.
- Baptism, weddings, confirmation, beginning school, getting a driver's license, graduation, anniversaries, retirement, becoming a deacon or elder and returning from military deployment can all be faith milestones. They can:
  - connect faith with daily life experiences;
  - promote Christian faith formation and outreach into the larger community, reaching out beyond the church walls;
  - use faith practices to deepen the Christian foundation in people's lives; and
  - bless and enrich relationships of family, friends and the entire church community.

## ***Suggestions for Other References***

### R1: The Feminization of the Church

Patrick Johnstone, "Operation World"

David Murrow, "Why Men Hate Going to Church", Nelson Books

Leon J. Podles, "The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity", Spense Publishing Company

Nancy Pearcey, "Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From its Cultural Captivity", Crossway Books

"American Evangelism", University of Chicago Press, 1998

### R4: Why Men Hate Going to Church

David Murrow, "How Women Help Men Find God".

### R13: We Can Do That

- a. Presentation by Mike Cole at 2013 Officer Enrichment - not available yet
- b. <http://www.vitalchurchesinstitute.com/pages/acts-16-5>
- c. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/What-is-Transformational-Church>
- d. Feb. 2006 WPC Acts 16.5 task force:  
Linda Thomas  
Jennifer Carr  
Al Manson  
Nina Moede  
Wade Barclay  
Deborah Cooper  
Helen DeLeon


### R15: Beyond Bricks and Mortar

Human Resource Magazine article "Mixing It Up," by Adrienne Fox  
Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion*

R16: Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas

From the article:

**John Roberto** is the editor of *Lifelong Faith* and the author of the new book, *Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation* (LifelongFaith Associates).







## Examples of Children's Classroom Blogs

The Brainwaves (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade): [http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger\\_id=148947](http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=148947)

Mr. C's Class Blog (5<sup>th</sup> Grade):  
<http://mrcsclassblog.blogspot.com>

Kindergarten Tales Blog:  
<http://kdgroom102.blogspot.com>



The Kinder Kids Blog: [http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger\\_id=51141](http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=51141)

Mrs. Perry's Fourth Grade Class Blog:  
<http://mrsperrysblog.blogspot.com>

The Year Two Smarties:  
<http://thesmarties2.blogspot.com>



## Examples of Blogs for Leaders

Catechist's Journey Blog (Joe Paprocki):

[www.loyolapress.com/blogs-catechists-journey.htm](http://www.loyolapress.com/blogs-catechists-journey.htm)

Children's Ministry Blog (Christine Yount Jones):

[www.childrensministry.com/blogs/childrens-ministry-blog](http://www.childrensministry.com/blogs/childrens-ministry-blog)

Edutopia Blogs (various writers on educational innovation): [www.edutopia.org/blogs](http://www.edutopia.org/blogs)

KidTech Blog (Matthew Guevara):

[www.corycenter.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=40475](http://www.corycenter.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=40475)

Ministry-To-Children Blog (Tony Kummer):

<http://ministry-to-children.com>

The Religion Teacher Blog (Jared Dees):

[www.thereligionteacher.com](http://www.thereligionteacher.com)

Weblogg-ed (Will Richardson): [www.weblogg-ed.com](http://www.weblogg-ed.com)



R23: Many Churches Experiencing Decline

The following excerpt from the article suggests two references:

"Many churches in the United States, regardless of denomination, are in decline, facing a downturn in attendance and participation. As a means to facilitate conversation about this concern, we at *The Wired Word* suggest two media pieces.

One is an editorial by Tom Ehrich, first published by *Religion News Service* and then picked up by *The Washington Post*. Ehrich, a church consultant and Episcopal priest, was responding to a letter issued earlier this month by the Taskforce on Reimagining the Episcopal Church -- a group formed to consider how to restructure that denomination at the national level to stem the decline in membership and attendance at the local level. Ehrich's response was not limited to the Episcopal Church, but applies to mainline denominations in general.

The other is an interview with John S. Dickerson, senior pastor of Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church in Prescott, Arizona, who recently published a book called *The Great Evangelical Recession*, which, as the title suggests, is about a decline in evangelical Christianity."

Also, one of the references used to generate the data from this article is a blog from *The Institute of Religion and Democracy*. Whenever this organization is referenced, it suggests that another study should be undertaken to provide balance. The 2007 book *Steeplejacking: How the Christian Right is Hijacking Mainstream Religion* by Sheldon Culver and John Dorhauer is a prominent resource to understand how the opinions of the *Institute of Religion and Democracy* might need to be balanced.

DRAFT

## **Example Findings**

The information collected by this effort was intended for group discussion of the results to sort out the positive aspects of WPC seen by the congregation, the roles and responsibilities of the groups dealing with membership issues, the trends affecting WPC membership, and the potential actions to address membership issues. Near the end of this effort, such a group was formed and exercised a subset of data. This group intentionally did not go through all of the data, nor complete the process. Therefore, the results provided in this section are to be treated as examples of how the information in this report could be used.

Also, given the limited period of time available for real impact during the transition period of a new pastor, it was intended to provide an opportunity to highlight some of the actions that might be time critical.

### ***Gifts of the Spirit***

It was decided that the list of "What about WPC Makes You Proud" will be converted in a list of "Gifts of the Spirit" and one entry in that list will be placed in the bulletin each week. This list will also be available to other groups if needed.

The actions team decided that providing the results of this part of the effort to the congregation needed to begin immediately. The summarized list from Question 1 of the interviews was reformed into "Gifts of the Spirit" and one item per week will be put in the church bulletin beginning February 1, 2015. A minute for mission explaining the source of the "Gifts of the Spirit" points has been prepared and will be delivered to the congregation.

### ***Common Complaints and Negative Comments***

The original intent was not to provide a set of negative comments and complaints. However, the interview data did collect a set of common issues, which were then captured and summarized. This information will be provided as-is to the staff and leadership.

## ***Roles and Responsibilities - Example Findings***

One theme that predates the efforts of the Membership Coordinating Team and in fact the source of the name of the effort is the general recognition that actions associated with a difficult problem such as membership issues need to be coordinated/integrated. Such coordination does not come easily in the current structure of WPC leadership where Session members become advocates for individual ministry areas before being advocates for the church as a whole. The following are three such examples of findings that have yet to be fully vetted and *in no way represent the full extent of what roles and responsibilities findings that can be extracted from this information.*

### **Example Roles and Responsibility Finding 1 - Membership Supercommittee**

The Outreach Committee provided a significant number of ideas to address membership issues. However their charter was unclear and at times seemed to overlap with the communication committee. Likewise there are communication needs that are specific to other groups such as Welcoming and the Deacons. Hence, it might be advantageous to stand up a supercommittee (such as the Nurture Team or the Shepherds of the Treasury) to allow the leaders of Outreach, Communication, Welcoming, and Care to coordinate efforts. Clarity in the Outreach charter would also be an aspect of this finding.

### **Example Roles and Responsibility Finding 2 - Nurture Supercommittee**

The presence of dedicated staff members for Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry have the effect of forcing all three ministry areas (Adult included) to operate independently and without proper coordination. This is especially noticable in the overlaps with parents and young adults. Although the Nurture Supercommittee does exist, it has been used only for planning joint activities during special seasons. This supercommittee might be called into service to more closely work to coordinate the efforts and grow mutual understanding. An possible more extreme use of this concept would be to turn over the chairs of these individual ministry areas to lay leaders and have the ruling elders operate at the Nurture team level to enforce this mutual understanding.

### **Example Roles and Responsibility Finding 3 - Coordinated Signage**

One issue that was found in the brief assessment of this dataset was that signage was very important for allowing new members to feel welcome. Both Campus Management and Communications have efforts in this area that need coordination. Supposedly other groups such

as all three Nurture areas, Fellowship, and Worship will also have needs that should be coordinated. It is likely only an awareness of the multiple efforts will be needed to enable this coordination. In fact, this was an action from the 2014 Session retreat.

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## ***Membership Trends - Example Findings***

As with Roles and Responsibilities, *the assessment of this data to extract trends affecting membership is in no way complete nor vetted.* Hence, the following are just three examples of trends potentially affecting membership.

### **Example Trends Finding 1 - Limited Public Draw**

The loss of the day school, the availability of the church for public weddings, and the drawdown of VBS have been suggested as events that have limited the activities that draw non-WPC people into the church. This loss may be a contributor to a downward trend in membership.

### **Example Trends Finding 2- External Trends We Cannot Affect**

Several obvious and obscured trends that WPC has little control over were noted. Among these are the draw-down of the NASA and NASA Contractor communities; the installation of the Webster By-Pass; external religious controversies; growth of Spiritual but not Religious mindsets; and loss of civil discourse and strong relationships in public forums (including at the National and Presbytery level in our own denomination).

### **Example Trends Finding 2 - External Trends We Can Affect**

There were several external trends noted that WPC can address locally. The most surprising was the feminization of the church and the visible but not noticed effect on the role of men in the church. The trend away from facility-dominated and Sunday morning centric worship is another issue that could be addressed within WPC if it chooses (although options become limited with a significant mortgage or if we become a one pastor church). The apparent needs of younger people and disassociated people appear to be different than the church has been assuming for several years. These issues could be addressed by a realistic understanding of what these groups need, desire, can offer, and interact.

## ***Potential Actions - Example Findings***

*There is far more information on actions in this data that WPC can take than have been assessed to-date.* The following examples were extracted by the actions team and show the breadth of actions that are possible - not the complete list.

### **Example Actions Finding 1 - Immediate Coordination of "Lost Sheep" Activities**

One action that resulted as an immediate need was to coordinate the actions of the various groups that individually and without coordination are contacting and addressing the "Lost Sheep" members. Although these members who have drifted away do not represent the total sum of potential growth, they are a group that generally need to be contacted in short order. The time of pastoral transition is a limited and critical resource that should be utilized. Individuals (Linda Smith-Gregory, Jessie Keuhner, Roy Phillips) as well as the deacons have names of members that have reduced their time at WPC. It is highly recommended that these individuals and representatives of the deacons should meet with both pastors and any other discerning and knowledgeable members (and affected committee reps) to assure that the initial contact and follow-up with these folks is handled in the most effective and sensitive manner possible.

### **Example Actions Finding 2 - Light Sanctuary Windows at Night**

It is a common occurrence to have non-affiliated people come to the church just to see the sanctuary windows. The windows also offer a unique testament to the WPC mission statement. However, the impact of these windows is reduced by being dark at night. Campus Management has been looking into ways to effectively enable lighting these windows in a cost-effective manner. In fact, the conversations within the actions team have advanced those plans.

### **Example Actions Finding 3 - Wednesday Game Night**

Add (or Expand *Games with Stephen*) games to draw in more external people. Bingo and other games were listed as examples with precedent in other church settings.

### **Example Actions Finding 4 - Initiate an Alternative Worshipping Community**

There was much consternation listed in the interviews concerning worship times and formats. However, most of this discussion considered the needs of the current attending members. To reach the growing number of people who do not attend WPC or another church, a new worshipping community might need to be added to the list of options. The ability to allow deep experimentation with the times, locations, role of mission, role of dialog/bible study, external speakers, etc. might also require an entirely separate Worship and/or Adult Ministry committee to be initiated as well. Otherwise history dictates that the potential of such a foray into the role of generating new disciples will be incomplete at best.

# Recommendations

The recommendations that can be provided (given the planned termination of this effort) primarily involve what the next steps might be and how this information might be used.

## Proposed Next Steps

1. Move forward with the following actions:

Continuing publication of "Gifts of the Spirit" in the bulletin;

Example Action Finding 1 - Immediate Coordination of "Lost Sheep" Activities; and

Example Action Finding 2 - Light Sanctuary Windows at Night.

2. Present the current document to the 2015 Session with a recommendation that the individual elders review the contents and determine if a detailed review of the information is warranted at a later Session meeting or a retreat. At a minimum, the individual ruling and teaching elders will be provided the opportunity to review and comment before the report becomes "final".

2. The original intent was that this information would be used for a group discussion with the elders and/or deacons. This recommendation still stands that such a group discussion should occur - either in a dedicated leadership forum, a dedicated follow-on task force (or more than one), or with the congregation as well. This group should complete the review and assessment of the Interview Summaries (How We Answered) and the References Summaries (What They Would Tell Us). This would generate a complete list of Roles and Responsibilities, Trends, and Actions that would be then be vetted. The groups that would perform this detailed review would be chosen to sync up with the pastor's transition planning.

4. The next recommendation is to return to the congregation and engage the larger group in discussion concerning these summary findings and/or the final vetted assessments and actions. Planning was underway to provide this discussion as part of an activity that is described in the next subsection and referred to as "The Herd is on the Move: WPC in Transition". The state of this planning is available as-is if needed but this does not have to be forum for congregational involvement.

5. The final recommendation is to initiate any of the final vetted actions that make sense to initiate.

## The Herd is on the Move: WPC in Transition

### One Day Whole Church Event October 15, 2014 Version

This proposal is for a series of talks with time for discussion and feedback for the whole congregation. The intent is to provide an understanding of the issues going on outside of WPC that have a direct influence on the current state and future directions for WPC. It is also a time to either prepare ourselves for the next pastor if they are not called or directly interact with the new pastor about future directions if available. The planning date was January 31 but that is the Church Officer Enrichment event and the date will have to move – potentially as far as March 7. One approach is to have the morning session in the sanctuary for general topics and invite members from area churches. Lunch and the afternoon session would be in the Fellowship hall and would be WPC-specific. We would need to provide child care activities for the day while allowing parents and Linda to attend the sessions. Youth should participate as full members or in service roles as they feel appropriate.

#### 1. General Interest

##### a. Primary Topic – **State of the Larger Church**

Focus on the State of the Presbytery with a little Presbyterian Trends - Potential Leaders – Presbytery Staff

##### b. Backup Topic – *Transformational Church: “Growing Healthy Churches”, the Transformational Church, Connectional Church* - Potential Leaders: Presbytery Staff

##### c. Backup Topic – *External Trends in the Church: Worship Styles* - Contemporary/Alternative Worship Styles, Trends in Worship - Potential Leaders: TBD

#### 2. General Interest

##### a. Primary Topic – **Transformational Church**

“Growing Healthy Churches”, the Transformational Church, Connectional Church - Potential Leaders: Presbytery Staff

##### b. Backup Topic – *Changing Learning Styles: iGeneration, Learning Approaches, “You Lost Me”* - Potential Leaders: Linda Smith-Gregory, Jessie Kuehner, Ann Wilson, Senior High Youth, College or Young Adults

##### c. Backup Topic - *External Trends in the Church: Movements: Emergent Church, NeXT Church, Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Potential Leaders – Kevin Snowden, Linda Smith-Gregory, Helen DeLeon*

#### 3. General Interest

##### a. Primary Topic – **Changing Learning Styles**

iGeneration, Learning Approaches, “You Lost Me” - Potential Leaders: Linda Smith-Gregory, Jessie Kuehner, Ann Wilson, Senior High Youth, College or Young Adults

##### b. Backup Topic – *Focus on Learning Approaches i.e. How we do Christian Education: Linda Smith-Gregory*

##### c. Backup Topic - *External Trends in the Church: Movements: Emergent Church, NeXT Church, Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Potential Leaders – Kevin Snowden, Linda Smith-Gregory, Helen DeLeon*

- d. Backup Topic – *External Trends in the Church: Worship Styles* - Contemporary/Alternative Worship Styles, Trends in Worship - Potential Leaders: TBD
  - e. Backup Topic – *New Beginnings Assessment Program*: The presentations slides for the workshop on the New Beginnings Assessment Program workshop are available and could form the basis for a session that covers not just the program but the interesting background information (some may be a part of the Membership Trends Session). – Potential Leaders: MCT, Helen DeLeon
4. WPC Specific
- a. Primary Topic – **History**  
Focus on WPC History with a little Church and Presbyterian History to support a discussion how we got to our current situation (Might use the New Beginnings Assessment concept on the typical lifetime of a church as a framework) - Potential Leaders: Pastors, Pat Brackett, Judy Alton
  - b. Backup Topic – *WPC Today and the Future*: Demographics, Vision Plans, SATF Alignment Plans, Membership Changes, Digital Technology Plans, PNC Report?, Growth Plans - Potential Leaders: Selected Elders
  - c. Backup Topic – *WPC Membership Trends*: Findings from the MCT concerning the changes in WPC Membership over the last decade - Potential Leaders: MCT
5. WPC Specific
- a. Primary Topic – **WPC Membership Trends**  
Findings from the Membership Coordinating Team (MCT) concerning the changes in WPC Membership over the last decade - Potential Leaders: MCT
  - b. Backup Topic – *WPC Membership Actions*: Findings from the MCT concerning the potential actions that have been suggested - Potential Leaders: MCT
6. WPC Specific
- a. Primary Topic – **WPC Membership Actions**  
Findings from the Membership Coordinating Team (MCT) concerning the potential actions that have been suggested - Potential Leaders: MCT
  - b. Backup Topic – *WPC Membership Trends and Actions*: Condensed and combined session covering the findings of the MCT – Potential Leaders: MCT
  - c. Backup Topic – *What We Have Learned about Ourselves*: The PNC had to do a lot of background work to understand WPC and where it is going. This session would be a time to hear and discuss all of this information that helps us understand ourselves and is non-specific to the pastoral candidates. – Potential Leaders: PNC
7. WPC Specific
- a. Primary Topic – **Preparation for the New Pastor**  
Assume a planning team has developed and is implementing a welcoming plan of activities for a new pastor, this plan will be discussed in this session – Potential Leaders: Planning Team members
  - b. Backup Topic – *WPC Today and the Future*: Demographics, Vision Plans, SATF Alignment Plans, Membership Changes, Digital Technology Plans, PNC Report, Growth Plans - Potential Leaders: Selected Elders

- c. Backup Topic – *New Beginnings Assessment Program*: The presentations slides for the workshop on the New Beginnings Assessment Program workshop are available and could form the basis for a session that covers not just the program but the interesting background information (some may be a part of the Membership Trends Session). – Potential Leaders: MCT, Helen DeLeon
- d. Backup Topic – *What We Have Learned about Ourselves*: The PNC had to do a lot of background work to understand WPC and where it is going. This session would be a time to hear and discuss all of this information that helps us understand ourselves and is non-specific to the pastoral candidates. – Potential Leaders: PNC
- e. Backup Topic – *Vision of the New Pastor*: TBD by the new pastor – Potential Leader: New Senior Pastor

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## Appendix A: Motions

### ***Motion #1: Form a Membership Coordination Team***

It is moved that an ad hoc Membership Coordination Team be formed to coordinate the actions of the multiple groups with responsibilities for and sensitivity to the membership of WPC. The minimum set of duties include;

1. Detailing roles and responsibilities for the affected groups ;
2. Developing a draft list of the causes of membership change for the last several years;
3. Developing a proposed list of actions to address on-going membership changes (if needed);
4. Suggest which of the proposed actions should begin immediately and which should not be implemented until after a permanent senior pastor is called; and
5. Provide the information to a larger cross-section of the affected groups for completion and validation.

### **Background**

This motion is focused on the need to form such a task force and the global responsibilities of the team. A second motion suggests the task force logistics (makeup, time frame, organization, parent committee).

Multiple groups (Board of Deacons, Membership Review Committee, Outreach Committee, Welcoming Committee, Youth Ministry Team, Children's Ministry Team, Communications Committee, Staff, and Session) are independently working different aspects of the state of the WPC membership. These groups need to understand what the others are doing and share information. Also, it is critical that these multiple groups work to collectively understand the state and flux of the WPC membership. There is also a need for these groups to harmoniously coordinate actions and maintain a collective awareness of the direction of the Holy Spirit. Also, there is a short-term need for a visible center to focus discussion, actions, passion, and prayer as the membership changes.

This short-lived activity should be viewed as the first step in a process to address the coupled needs of discipleship including enhancing church growth, connecting the members, and addressing the needs of the body. Follow-on activities will be defined but not necessarily carried out by this team. The Outreach Committee is one logical place for these membership coordination duties to reside in the future.

Similar discussions and activities have been called for in the past but have not been acted upon, however time is now critical as:

1. The PNC is active;
2. The Outreach Committee is planning future activities as well as it's own charter;
3. Multiple groups have incomplete information and are performing uncoordinated activities;
4. Some members may be at-risk to drift from the church;
5. A source of lost members may exist that might return;
6. The SATF alignment planning is underway;
7. Various actions to enhance communications and plan for increased use of digital technology are being considered; and
8. Certain groups such as young adults, and early childhood families are nearing critical levels.

## ***Motion #2: Logistics of the Membership Coordination Team***

It is moved that:

- A. The Membership Coordination Team includes representatives from the following groups;
  1. Board of Deacons,
  2. Membership Review Team,
  3. Welcoming Committee,
  4. Outreach Committee,
  5. Communications Committee,
  6. Youth Ministry Team,
  7. Children's Ministry Team,
  8. Staff,
  9. Session; and
  10. Two at-large members of the congregation.
- B. The PNC will have a standing offer to participate in meetings and correspondence;
- C. The individual teams, committees, and boards will select their own members to serve on this task force;
- D. The Membership Coordination Team will only provide recommendations to individual committees unless supported by direct Session action;
- E. The Outreach Committee will act as interface with the Session when necessary; and
- F. George James will act as the organizing moderator to call and moderate the first meeting and lead the team as it organizes itself and sets the schedule - subject to the boundaries of informing critical near-term activities and disbanding no later than six months after initiation(unless renewed by Session).

### **Background**

The critical decision on the formation of a Membership Coordination Team and its primary duties is the subject of a separate motion. This motion will be withdrawn or amended as needed based on the outcome of the motion to form a Membership Coordination Team.

This task force will represent the groups that need to engage in the coordination of activities associated with current, past, and future membership changes.

The intent is to leave this group to organize itself and set its own schedules and timelines subject to the need to support the most critical ongoing discussions and needs as well as known constraints due to planning schedules for major church activities and expected officer/leadership changes. Critical ongoing activities that constrain the team schedule may include the following:

1. An active PNC,
2. Discussions on the role of the Outreach Committee,
3. Near term actions that may be called for by this task force;
4. Uncoordinated program planning by the affected groups;
5. etc.

## **Appendix B: Newsletter Articles**

### ***September 2014***

"Membership Coordination Team

Over the last few years, WPC has been through a Visioning process, developed a Mission Statement, chartered the Strategic Analysis Task Force (SATF), and fielded a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). With these footprints in place, a next step in our march into the future is begin to understand the state and changes in the WPC membership.

The Session has recently approved the creation of a limited-term commission to initiate coordination and discussion between the various groups that deal with the WPC membership. This team will be active over the next six months and will be consolidating insights, ideas, and inputs from a wide variety groups and individuals within and outside of WPC. This team will be working to collect information from three different aspects of our membership: (1) the roles and responsibilities of the different groups that touch our membership; (2) the trends that have been changing our membership over the last few years; and (3) any actions related to membership that need to be taken as WPC moves forward.

Throughout this process the team will also be collecting and compiling positive statements related to our church and the ways that WPC enhances our relationship with Christ. More information and contacts for your insights will be available soon.

George James  
WPC Elder - Class of 2015"

### ***October 2014***

"Membership Coordination Team

Over the last few years, WPC has been through a Visioning process, developed a Mission Statement, chartered the Strategic Analysis Task Force (SATF), and fielded a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). With these footprints in place, a next step in our march into the future is begin to understand the state and changes in the WPC membership.

This team will be active over the next five months and will be consolidating insights, ideas, and inputs from a wide variety groups and individuals within and outside of WPC. This team will be working to collect information from three different aspects of our membership: (1) the roles and responsibilities of the different groups that touch our membership; (2) the trends that have been changing our membership over the last few years; and (3) any actions related to membership that need to be taken as WPC moves forward. Jonathan Snowden and Janis Edwards will be co-leading the Roles and Responsibilities activities. Marjorie Seiter will be leading the Membership Trends activity. Jimm Cooper will be leading the Membership Actions activity. George James is acting as the initiating moderator of the activity.

In addition to these leads, there are nine additional team members representing different groups with membership responsibilities. Also, there are a large number of At-Large Support folks that are assisting. Currently the team is interviewing the different groups in the church with responsibilities for addressing membership issues. The team is also working to collect information from individuals or groups that have ideas and insights concerning: (a) trends in membership, (b) actions WPC should consider to address membership issues, and (c) positive statements related to our church and the ways that WPC enhances our relationship with Christ.

If anyone thoughts or insights on any of these topics or wants to assist in collecting and consolidating this information, please contact one of the leads mentioned above.

George James  
WPC Elder - Class of 2015"

## ***November 2014***

"Membership Coordination Team

The efforts of the Membership Coordination Team represent a next step into the future for WPC as we begin to understand the state and changes in the WPC membership. This team has been actively working over the last several weeks to canvas an ever broadening section of WPC ministry committees, small groups and individuals. The team is engaging in discussions to understand roles and responsibilities, to uncover membership trends, and to generate potential actions.

This team has had very informative discussions with over six committees, two small groups, and 10 individuals (as of this printing). The team is continuing to actively expand the inputs by interviewing other groups and individuals. Also during October, the team will begin to consolidate the information provided in these interviews.

While this is happening, you may be nudged by the Holy Spirit to:

1. Suggest someone that should be "interviewed" about membership ideas;
2. Contribute ideas concerning membership for consideration;
3. Help "interview" people or groups about membership issues;
4. Get involved in the process of consolidating and presenting this information;
5. Be a part of discussion and discernment after the results are presented; or
6. Just start active conversations about membership with other WPC members.

If you feel the call to take part in any of these ways you will find that there are people around who are actively supporting this team or can direct you to someone that is. The elders, the deacons, and the staff members (as well as many committee members) can also direct you to someone on the team.

Don't delay – most of the active "interviews" will be over in a few weeks and this activity will be wrapped up in four months.

George James  
WPC Elder - Class of 2015"

## ***December 2014***

"Membership Coordination Team

The efforts of the Membership Coordination Team represent a next step into the future for WPC as we begin to understand the state and changes in the WPC membership. This team has been actively working over the last several weeks to canvas an ever broadening section of WPC ministry committees, small groups and individuals. The team is engaging in discussions to understand roles and responsibilities, to uncover membership trends, and to generate potential actions.

This team has had very informative discussions with over six committees, two small groups, seven staff members, and 11 individuals (as of this printing). The team is continuing to actively expand the inputs by

interviewing other groups and individuals. Also during October, the team will begin to consolidate the information provided in these interviews.

While this is happening, you may be nudged by the Holy Spirit to:

1. Suggest someone that should be "interviewed" about membership ideas;
2. Contribute ideas concerning membership for consideration;
3. Help "interview" people or groups about membership issues;
4. Get involved in the process of consolidating and presenting this information;
5. Be a part of discussion and discernment after the results are presented; or
6. Just start active conversations about membership with other WPC members.

If you feel the call to take part in any of these ways you will find that there are people around who are actively supporting this team or can direct you to someone that is. The elders, the deacons, and the staff members (as well as many committee members) can also direct you to someone on the team.

Don't delay – most of the active "interviews" will be over in a few weeks and this activity will be wrapped up in three months.

George James  
WPC Elder - Class of 2015"

## ***January 2015***

"Membership Coordination Team

As of this printing, 17 representatives of the Membership Coordination Team have interviewed:

- A. Seven committees (48 committee participants);
- B. Three groups (10 WPC members);
- C. Seven staff members; and
- D. 14 individuals.

Additionally, summaries have been provided for deacon conversations with 14 families and five of the current 22 references.

Although the team is expecting to interview a few more individuals and summarize additional references, the next phase of the activity has begun. In mid-January, sub-teams will be synthesizing this information to address three questions:

1. What makes WPC members proud?
2. What has driven the trends in WPC membership? and
3. What potential actions should WPC consider to address membership issues or changes?

There is still time to answer the nudging of the Holy Spirit to get involved in this activity by:

- Suggesting individuals, groups, or references that should be "interviewed";
- Contribute your own ideas concerning membership;
- Helping to with the final interviews;
- Summarizing some of the references that have been suggested;
- Participating in one of the three sub-teams to synthesize this information; or
- Organizing discussion and discernment opportunities for other WPC members.

If you feel the call to take part in any of these ways you will find that there are people around who are actively supporting this team or can direct you to someone that is. The elders, the deacons, and the staff members can direct you to someone on the team or contact George James (GHJames3@aol.com).

George James  
WPC Class of 2015 Elder”

## ***February 2015***

“Membership Coordination Team

As of this printing, 17 representatives of the Membership Coordination Team have interviewed over 100 church members as individuals, families, small groups, and committees. Also, reports for several of the 23 listed references have been summarized and the information included in the data base.

The first round of meetings to consolidate the information have been held. A draft report and a presentation to Session are planned for the month of February 2015. In fact, the plan is to wrap up this effort by the end of February.

The final report should provide information related to several items:

1. What makes WPC members proud?
2. What has driven the trends in WPC membership?
3. What potential actions should WPC consider to address membership issues or changes?, and
4. What overlaps and gaps are seen in the Roles and Responsibilities of the different WPC groups that directly affect membership.

Although the team is still planning to perform a limited number of additional interviews, there is limited time to answer the nudging of the Holy Spirit and get involved in this activity.

There are a few final activities that might be considered for those that are interested in participating in this phase of the activity:

- Suggesting individuals, groups, or references that should be “interviewed”;
- Contribute your own ideas concerning membership;
- Helping to with the final interviews;
- Summarizing some of the references that have been suggested;
- Participating in the discussions to synthesize this information; and
- Organizing discussion and discernment opportunities for other WPC members.

If you feel the call to take part in any of these ways you will find that there are people around who are actively supporting this team or can direct you to someone that is. The elders, the deacons, and the staff members can direct you to someone on the team or contact George James (GHJames3@aol.com).

George James  
WPC Class of 2015 Elder”

## ***March 2015***

“Membership Coordination Team

The planned Membership Coordinating Team activities wrapped up with a draft report provided to the Session at the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. One of the biggest success of this effort was the nearly 150 people that contributed including the resulting dialog and inherent relationship development. Contributors included people that participated in (a) planning; (b) Session discussion; (c) interviews (as individuals, groups, or interviewers); (d) suggesting or summarizing references; (f) consolidating the data; (g) final

assessment; and (h) reviewing the final report. It is exciting to think that there are so many opportunities for the Holy Spirit to have spoken through these contributions.

The information provided by this effort is in a format that is primed for detailed discussion by a dedicated group. There are over eight pages of bulleted points collected from the interview split into five major topics. There are also summaries for 25 references sorted into similar topics. The topical information covering the *positive comments* made about WPC is already being made available to the congregation as the "Gifts of the Spirit" entries in the bulletin. *Common complaints* was another topic and this information has been provided to the appropriate groups. The topics of ideas for *membership trends*, ideas to *retain members*, and ideas to *attract new members* are ready to drive our understanding and feed future membership initiatives. Let us pray for the opportunity to listen with our hearts and minds.

The next steps in utilizing and this information will be driven by the Pastor and the Session.

Thanks to all who gave time and insight!

George James

DRAFT

# Appendix C: Blank Interview Form

**Interview Type:**

*Roles and Responsibilities or Trends and Actions*

**Participants:**

**Background:**

**1. What are you most proud of at WPC?**

**2. What do you or your group do to:**

A. Attract new members (outreach, welcoming)?

B. Retain current members (care, service)?

C. Get back inactive members (may not have attended in the last year)?

**3. Do you or your group have ideas to:**

A. Explain membership changes over the last several years (trends)?

B. Attract new members (action)?

C. Address membership in general?

**4. What other groups do you work with regarding membership (overlaps)?**

**5. Do you have suggestions for other individuals or groups to interview?**

**Additional Information:**

**Submitted by:**

Name1 Name2

[email](#)@address

# Appendix D: Interview Data Set

## ***D1: Background***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

The Board of Deacons have a role that is at the heart of dealing caring for current members.

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

The Outreach Committee was the first Roles and Responsibilities Interview performed. One member is acting as the MCT rep from the Outreach Committee. Another member has also been supporting the MCT in an At-Large role and in fact developed the final version of the questions that were used. This member also sent in some information separately, which has been integrated into this report. The Outreach Committee turned over the bulk of their meeting for discussion of these questions. A third member recorded the results of the discussions as well as the MCT members. The initial draft of this report is based on those notes.

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

The Communications Committee is one of the teams with a primary role in interacting with our membership – primarily but not exclusively the current members. Three members have been instrumental in planning and implementing the Membership Coordinating Team. However the other members have not contributed to the discussion as of yet. The discussion was still very informative as the new contributors, the communications focus, and the different mix of individuals brought out new topics.

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

There were nine people representing Hosting, Connecting, and Engaging at this interview.

### **C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

No youth were present and the staff member left the room.

### **C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

The staff liaison decided to stay in the room for this interview and the discussion that resulted was not balanced. To form a more complete picture, the CMT members should be interviewed separately.

However, this was still a useful interview. The positive statements and positive tone of the review are true although unbalanced and not complete. This report is a useful additional to the membership discussion and needs to be considered - but the complete picture of the membership state of the Children's Ministry must be uncovered and recorded.

### **C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

The Membership Review Team began working about six years ago with Joyce Sens, Sandy Murphy, and Anne Waehner as some of the early participants. The mission was to purge the rolls as needed and begin to provide actual membership numbers. The Membership Review Team is tasked to contact individuals and families that appear to have left the church and determine if they wish to be removed from the rolls and make a recommendation for those that cannot be contacted. As such this team does hear some feedback on why people are leaving WPC and where they are going.

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

Five WPC members attended a workshop covering the New Beginnings Assessment Program. This is a for-pay service jointly offered by the Disciples of Christ, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterian Church USA. It is designed to assist churches going through a major transition and significant decisions due to pressures associated with infrastructure, membership, finances, or changing demographics. The program is designed to help these churches understand their situation and guide them through a discernment process.

The slides from the workshop are available at the Membership Coordinating Team location on the WPC Website under Family of Faith. The slides and discussions at the workshop contained information that will be useful for the Membership Trends discussion. Actually taking part in the program is an action that is appropriate for discussion as a Membership Action. Hence, this report is intended to provide the placeholders for those upcoming discussions.

**G2: Group - Small Group**

This small group interview was the first interview performed for this effort.

**G3: Group - Small Group**

NA

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

NA

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

NA

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

NA

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

NA

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

Glenn and Geri are the Music Directors at WPC. They therefore interface directly with the Worship Committee but also interact strongly with the Youth, the Children, and the A/V team. They also represent the longest serving staff members at WPC.

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

I1 recently served on the Nominating Committee and was a long-time member of Clear Lake Presbyterian before coming to WPC. The family also has a consistent history with other Presbyterian churches in New Mexico.

**I2: Individual**

I2 is a new member at WPC and a Young Adult. I2 is new to being a Presbyterian but has actually been through elder training and has worked A/V in another denomination/church. I2 also has acted as a youth sponsor.

**I3: Individual**

I3 provided the original version of these comments after taking part in the interview of the deacons. However, the nature of the comments were such that they were worthy of independent consideration. Therefore, the next step was to convert these comments into an “interview” of I3 to allow this stand-alone discussion. I3 is a sitting elder and has supported the Youth Ministry Team.

**I4: Individual**

I4 grew up in WPC and was a youth elder. I4 participated in choir, mission trips, Joyful Noyze, and VBS. I4 recently graduated from college and is leaving WPC to move out-of-state.

**I5: Individual**

I5 (a couple) are 20 year members of the church that are leaving due to retirement and relocation. They were critical leaders in the youth, children, worship, session and many other aspects of WPC life.

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

**I6 & I7: Individual**

I6 and I7 were interviewed separately but reported together. These interviews are both an extension of the CMT interview and individual interviews. Both are parents of children at WPC. Both have been long time members of the Children’s Ministry Team. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

Much of this information does not fit into the interview format as it is supplemental information to the CMT interview. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

**I8: Individual**

I8 was actually three people (a couple and an adult child). They are long term members of the congregation. They have been active in S&F, Campus Management, and Fellowship. They are also parent and grandparents of a recently graduated youth and a current child in the church.

**I9: Individual**

In the past I9 served as a deacon, an elder, on the building and grounds committee, with the administrative committee and co-managed the annual collections for two years. I9 is now in the seventies and a conservative (basic fundamentals of the Bible with no new ways of interrupting it). One of the past ministers who incidentally believed there was not a Satan, used to call I9 the Baptist Presbyterian.

**I10: Individual**

I10 has been at WPC for several years but has some in-depth experience with other churches.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

The D1 family quit attending WPC soon after Mark left. After several unsuccessful calls, email contact with D1 was made. The discussion as to why they have not been attending was made and the response provided the information reported below. It should be noted that D1 seemed to appreciate being asked.

**D2: Deacon Contact**

D2 is the adult child of members but has not attended WPC since February. D2 is unhappy about the SATF and the implied critique of D2 teaching youth Sunday school. D2 is also a parent.

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

Helen DeLeon asked the deacons in October to contact specific inactive members and let her know what we find out. Responses from D1, D2, and D3 are in this category but included separately.

DRAFT

## ***D2: Question 1 - What are you most proud of at WPC?***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

- A. Deacon board is wonderful, (especially their support of funerals) - very caring.
- B. Our congregation in general is compassionate & friendly.
- C. We encourage people to attend and bring them in.
- D. Friendliness, openness & welcoming nature of the church.
- E. Music in general is great, bells, choirs, recorders. Great variety! Top notch music program with great leaders. Love Joyful Noyze!
- F. Think of WPC as a family.
- G. Proud of all the work we do in the community such as McWhirter, Christmas gifts, etc.
- H. WPC makes it easy to get involved with lots of opportunities.
- I. Per one of the interviewers: The Deacons are one of the most positive, well-functioning group in the church. It is a wonderful mission of the church.

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

- 1. Friendliness,
- 2. Location,
- 3. Sanctuary,
- 4. History,
- 5. Art – Stained Glass,
- 6. Former Members – Roles in Space Program,
- 7. Engineers-a-plenty,
- 8. Music – Youth Musical,
- 9. Youth Program,
- 10. Openness – seeking answers

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

Intergenerational feel, interaction of young and old, full spectrum sense, youth helping the elderly, mentoring and encouraging, not just focused on “the youth” or “the elders”.

Vibrant youth group, encourages participation and leading, encourages activities both inside and outside of the church.

There is an effort to understand what worship is and how it can look, how it can change people. We are open asking “why are we doing it?” when considering changes to worship, with the goal that the role of items is to enhance service. An example is in considering how does worship move and when does it happen. Weekly communion at 1<sup>st</sup> service is another example. Initial concerns were present but there is now a feeling that we would miss it if we stopped - it is meaningful to worship.

An experience with First PC downtown was that it is so large that it is often impersonal. However, after the following experience of the past 28 years attending here have been amazing and it is a continuous thread in our lives. Also, having attended a Small Group nearly every Monday night for the past 11 years, has the experience of bringing a continuity of people. In Facebook interactions with friends who have moved away from the area, many say WPC will always be their church. The congregation is very loving.

Proud that Adult Sunday School often looks at science/technology/religion interactions.

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

Very unique sense of warmth and welcoming, which is probably above average.

A beautiful sanctuary

A multitude of programs and activities for every age group

Music is far above average

Offer two different styles of worship

Adult Sunday school classes are good, but there is low attendance. The Adult classes were best attended when a pastor was a co-leader.

We have a "faithful in service" core membership which is very service/mission minded, both inside the church and in the community.

The care, kindness, generosity of our family of faith at WPC. Whether it's assisting seniors, supporting McWhirter Elementary, providing and tending to memorial services or missions near and far, our members step forward to help.

Small groups are very important, as are the various activities/groups in the church

WPC is true/faithful to the message (not just "be the best you can be" theology)

#### **C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Members who have stuck through the hard times and the volunteers in our WPC community

Proud of the changes - some have been hard, but they needed to happen (like changes in the ownership of the building)

Changes like Jessie - she's the best thing because of how she has brought the youth together

That the youth have stuck it out with the facilities they have. The upstairs area is falling apart. Should have torn down this building rather than build the new sanctuary. Big pull from other churches that provide their own youth service, bigger groups, great facilities.

OBA (One Big Auction) - very proud of auction and everyone who gave to support our youth.

Mission work, Youth Synod, and Conclaves - we may be small but we had good participation in these youth events.

#### **C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

- VBS
- Kids very welcoming and visitors want to come back
- Encouraged by the conscientiousness with which budget is approved. Seek the Lord's will to benefit the congregation. Take spending money very seriously.
- Strong mission focus which attracts new families, Outreach
- Linda is a great asset. As a person with kids coming in new - felt that kids would do good here.
- Glenn and Geri - music ties the whole church together: Judy, the singers, choir, all the musicians. Glenn is a rock!
- Flexibility and progressive thinking of this church. You could bring a non-Christian or a NASA scientist and they could feel comfortable. Faith is not a barrier.
- Most of the kids have a strong faith background from home.
- Small group discussions/meetings - where you can see the body of Christ at work - the interworking of the church. Feel free to express your opinions.

#### **C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

We have good people in this church.

Most people aren't from Texas.

Older people are gonna keep coming to church – they have the attitude that “this is my church”.

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

After the workshop, the WPC participants were talking to Mary Marcotte. Her statement was that WPC was not a church that she initially thought of as a good candidate for this program. However, after we expressed an interest in she thought that WPC does like to do studies. Hence WPC might appreciate this program as it is not afraid to work to understand itself.

**G2: Group - Small Group**

Covenant groups - getting them started and having them continue to grow. We now have about 80 people in small group ministry.

Sense of community - people are very genuine and caring. They are always there for support and to show they care.

We are small, but mighty! For a church our size, we really are involved in many ongoing projects within our church community and outside of our church. (mission projects, ICM, McWhirter, Bay Area Turning Point, Meals on Wheels, etc.) Things going on all the time.

Senior Ministry - It was really needed and has been very successful since it was started. Has a lot of participation with 35 - 50 members attending events. (luncheons with speakers, trips, phone-a-friend, helping hands, holy rollers....)

**G3: Group - Small Group**

- the wonderful, caring people who are our church family
- the level in which WPC is involved in the community
- our history
- the openness to differing opinions and interpretation

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

It is a healthy congregation with core members who are strong.

WPC has good activities

WPC has members who can do anything and there is something for everyone.

WPC is not a church with issues tearing it apart.

WPC has a strong, faithful, energetic core, very involved in a wide variety of ways– teaching, singing, there is something for everyone

There is a strong commitment to traditional worship, as well as openness to new things in worship.

We have a great staff, a great clerk of session and treasurer.

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- We went to Peru and established a relationship. The people who went were transformed as well as the people there.
- At times, resistant to change, but our congregation rises to new opportunities (Family Promise, Summer Spotlight, Peru, etc.) & we do it well.

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

We're NOT a mega church - we'll know you by name (know kids as well as their parents and who goes together). We have lots of heritage, not just a neighborhood church (all over this area: League City, Pearland, Kemah, Friendswood, etc.)

We have good things going on at church; small details being dwelt on in negative ways. We need more people saying the positive things going on. Be a cheerleader for the church.

We have strong roots and wide branches! Everyone welcome and treated well.

Our childcare workers are very strong, professional, love kids and Jesus. They are certified in first aid, CPR, and AED use. They have had training course (online) in children and safety on the playground as well as in the classroom. They need to feel appreciated and part of the church so they will not leave and go somewhere else where they can make more money *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*. Very reliable, college students.

Feels good about security - lists in each room of who can pick up kids, and worker know the families.

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Her "babies" -- the Youth

Even though she has only been here a year, it is already a family with the Youth and their families

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

WPC is highly educated and is ability blessed.

It was not explicitly stated but they are obviously proud of the Music Ministry.

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

The interview did not specifically cover this question but the following statement resulting from the conversation: "There are a lot of good people at WPC."

**I2: Individual**

The music

A lot of Talent

**I3: Individual**

I3 loves going to Synod with the youth. (This comment is taken out of context and it will be expanded on in other sections – however it was worthy for this section).

#### **I4: Individual**

I4 was proud of the mission work, VBS, and the Youth Musical at WPC. It should be noted that I4 spoke of these things in the past tense when I4 was more actively involved. One thing that I4 remembers was when the youth planned and executed a musical.

The sense of family at WPC was spoken of - in the past sense also.

#### **I5: Individual**

- Youth program
- Caressa
- Got involved with Jr. High Youth in 2003
  - Created structure
  - More involved with PYC and church
  - Friends came to Confirmation
  - Brought in more volunteers/instructors
    - Dennis W., Watson D., Stephanie, Stacy, Jamee W.
  - Everyone got a chance to be heard; good exchange of ideas
  - Gave Jr Highs an identity
  - Created T-shirt
  - Involved congregation
  - Mentor program (Confirmation)
    - Confirmation group met every Saturday eve for 15 weeks
    - Kids could only miss up to 2 days = commitment
    - Kids chose 3 people from congregation they wanted as their mentor
      - Met once a week to get to know each other
  - Decrease due to:
    - Priorities
    - Schedules (outside)
    - Generational shift (parents and kids)
    - Church leadership
    - Support decreased after Mary Swan and Woody left
- Contemporary Service
  - More common language
  - Less formality
  - Grouping of things so they flowed from one part to another smoothly
  - Music is foundation (as opposed to formal liturgy)
  - Talked to other groups/people; created after lots of soul searching and planning
  - CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) every 6 weeks to discuss what was working and what wasn't
  - HR became a threat to ability to create
- VBS
- People at WPC
  - Friendly
  - But need to deepen our spiritual lives

#### **I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

NA

**I0: Individual**

We have been able to survive many unfortunate things through the years, but have still remained faithful and loyal to the church - such as: youth director (the one Woody brought) left, although it cost a lot of money to get her here, and she was gone in a year; financial setbacks that we have been able to overcome - God has been with us and has been able to pull us through; loss of many strong members through death, relocating, lack of leadership; children's school closing which really divided the church and caused many with young children to leave; many felt we should have built an education/admin wing instead of the sanctuary; loss of jobs at NASA and road changes; Mary Swan leaving - strain on personnel; problems with the land for the sanctuary because of the house on the corner; and other issues with Mark.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

The youth program including: the mission trips, the service work, construction/building opportunities, the social aspects, and the connections made.

Caressa was a great youth pastor.

Geri and Glen's music at the contemporary service.

The ESL classes taught at the church down the street.

Working with Dick Brackett and Sylvia Kinzler and Kim Harano.

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

### ***D3: Question 2A - What do you do to attract new members?***

#### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

Nothing specifically as a board, but more apt to greet a visitor & introduce them to Sylvia.

#### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

1. Publicizes activities to attract new members (some listed below);
2. Welcoming booth at community events (Friendswood 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival);
3. Rings door bells in Webster neighborhoods;
4. Register with Friendswood Chamber of Commerce;
5. SWAG -
  - a. T-Shirts,
  - b. Water with Q.R. Code,
  - c. Trinkets,
  - d. Toys,
  - e. etc.;
6. The Citizen Ad;
7. Social Media - WPC Outreach Youtube Channel,
8. VBS (CMT);
9. Musical (Youth);
10. Midnight Madness (Youth);
11. IC Waiting Room Care Package (Deacons);
12. Funeral Receptions (Deacons); and
13. Funerals and Weddings (Staff).

#### **C3: Committee - Communications**

Showing life at WPC to outsiders i.e. “Free the Captives” event – publicity  
Focus on communicating both outside and inside the church.  
Outside – need to interact with outside local, regional, even internationally.

#### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

We have hosts at the door to provide first contact as members and visitors come to Service.

We are the first contact; the first faces welcoming folks to our church.

We engage – we go to see them after they visit. We work at not being intrusive, we don’t go in their homes or take too much time, we just want to welcome them and give them a bag full of WPC goodies to welcome them. Besides the candy, the bags are full of info about WPC and its programs as well as a card with the names of who visited them.

We connect – we match their interests with a service opportunity in the church...”oh, you need to meet Jonathan!”

We notice when guests return and we try to reconnect with them that day, stop over and say hi again, invite to coffee or introduce them to someone.

A lot of the new members and visitors said they came after reading about us on our website!

Some say they saw our sign and some say they have always been Presbyterian. (This information should be shared with Communications committee.)

Visitor information is entered into a database where we track how many times they have visited and other information including when they attend Open Door Class or join the church. Reports are generated and shared with Jim Young (Outreach Committee). More reports and information could be shared as needed. Al Manson mentioned that we have about the same number of visitors as in past years and that about 40% are “out of town or family members.”

A “New Member/Open Door” class is held three times a year over 2 weeks during Sunday school hours. The first week is led by a pastor about what it means to be a Presbyterian. The second week is a tour of the facility and stained glass, a 5 minute video of WPC history, and a talk about the opportunities and programs available at WPC.

We walk with members as they join the Church, escorting them to the Session meeting, work to get them engaged as soon as possible.

A New Member Reception is held twice a year inviting new members, their deacons, and the pastors to a “get to know you” reception at a member’s home.

Be faithful.

Invite new members to join a bible study or small group.

**C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Tell kids to invite friends. They are very inclusive when bringing in their friends for things like the musical.

Kids wear their shirts, have water bottles, and Agape bags.

Front and center with VBS (very visible). When teenagers are engaged in church, it's a good place to stay.

**C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

Entry point (Children's Ministry) for new members. Definite role to play. Children's program attracts families. Linda goes to the services and meets visiting families and tells them about our program.

Pizza and a Movie to benefit our kids and attract the neighborhood kids

Summer Spotlight program

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

NA

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

NA

**G2: Group - Small Group**

One member of our group does work with the Engaging Team to talk to Open Door groups about the covenant groups in our church. That member explains what covenant groups are and talks to them about joining one. If one is not available to fit their needs, she tells them that new ones can be created. We also talked about the fact that the term "covenant" might seem a little intimidating to new people who really don't know what that involves. We thought that it might be stressed that it was a "small ministry" opportunity.

We did not feel that our group works with membership issues.

**G3: Group - Small Group**

bring up church in our conversations outside of church

welcome new visitors during worship and invite them to Sunday school, Wednesday night dinners, or church activities coming up

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

This is not my focus/role at church. I make a point to welcome everyone. I went with the Welcoming committee when they visited the Edgebrook neighborhood and gave out goodie/information gifts door-to-door and I really enjoyed that. I don't think we can measure results like the Edgebrook visit by a headcount. It's more about planting seeds and making disciples.

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- Post on Facebook @ events at WPC and thought provoking posts.
- Establish a personal relationship w/ visitors.
- Each wk send a personal note to 1<sup>st</sup> X guests.
- Work w/ the welcoming team about how they greet people at the door.

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

(Linda felt that her part of this was really discussed during the CMT meeting, but she did have these additional comments.)

Children's Chapel works really well. It is a worship service, NOT Sunday School. Children should graduate to regular worship after 3rd grade.

We are the most un-Presbyterian church she has ever attended. (Why do we say trespasses? The committees never change - people stay on them too long; need to rotate off. Same people on too many committees. We need to have representatives from the CMT on all of the committees.)

Very poor signage. A new family getting out of the car would have no idea where to go. Need signs (or a person directing) with arrows pointing to nursery, sanctuary, office, etc. Need help with parking - have to park far away, carry kids over a river of water to get to the building. (I did remind her that the "Holy Rollers" would park for anyone, young or old, who needed help getting into the church. They would be glad to have more cars to park!)

Our nursery is small, old, dusty and doesn't make a good impression. The rug needs to go all the way to the bathroom. When it is wet, the tile gets too slippery by that door.

Bathroom has no hot water -- really needs an upgrade and needs to be cleaned really well! 2 sets of toilet paper holders - one high, one low. Get rid of one.

Strategic Task Force said to focus on young families, but monetary decisions don't focus on that.

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Goes to their extracurricular events (band, football, dancing, etc.), wears her WPC shirt, talks to them and their friends in the stands - being visible in their habitats

In November, they are having Bring Your Friends to Church Day. Will show videos and discuss ways to actually ask their friends to come to church with them.

Group plays Ultimate Frisbee in the park in their WPC shirts. Hand out water bottles to people watching with the WPC logo on it. Invite them to play.

Participate in mission work in the community wearing their

WPC shirts. Want to be recognized and visible.

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

There was limited discussion on the Music Ministry events that bring outside people onto the church grounds.

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

NA

**I2: Individual**

NA

**I3: Individual**

NA

**I4: Individual**

NA

**I5: Individual**

NA

**I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

NA

**I10: Individual**

- Go out of my way to speak to strangers and welcome them and invite them to come, and involve them in activities that are going on at the church - such as Wholy Grounds after church, or Wednesday night

dinners, or special programs. Call them and personally invite them to make them feel a part of the group. Personal contact is the most important thing.

- Support the church financially and support the Youth program.
- Give memorial donations to the church.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

DRAFT

## ***D4: Question 2B - What do you do retain current members?***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

Keeping track of members that haven't been seen in a while. Contact them monthly (I'm thinking @ you, praying for you & Send birthday cards, holiday cards etc.). Care for the ill by contacting them, hospital visits, notify the pastors, and arrange meals. Get other people within the zone to contribute to care. Attend the Fellowship Connection event by zone.

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

Activities to retain current members are generally lead by other groups such as Welcoming, Worship, Christian Ed, and particularly Fellowship.

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

Make sure all members know what's going on via various communication methods.

Inside – supporting work of committees for congregation. Should be threaded through the life of the church “we don't make the news”.

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

Engage members in church activities and consciously keep them engaged. For example, we have two of our new members now serving on the welcoming committee!

Why come to church? Common reasons: connected to someone, a mission/activity, or a faith message.

### **C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Constant contact; calls from the adults and more importantly from the kids.

Offer rides to church events if needed. Can be difficult when the parents no longer come, but some of the kids still do.

Sending care packages to college students

Starting Young Adult group

### **C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

Children's performances - interacting with the rest of the congregation

Mural project - intergenerational activity (Anya)

Getting kids involved with real activities

Children's program is a large part of people staying in the church. Having relevant, age-appropriate materials and activities is important. We need to worry about making disciples not numbers of church members. Have to be meeting the needs of children and their families.

It's good that we have things for current members to do to retain them - involving their spouses too.

Lego building activity - displayed in narthex. Everyone enjoyed looking at the projects, and the kids were proud of their work. Ownership --

Parents Sunday School class very useful. Get into all different topics. Does not have a rigid curriculum, but looking forward to the class on Children's Spiritual Gifts (taught by Diane Kane)

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

Only if a phone call to members that have drifted away and no one has called counts.

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

NA

**G2: Group - Small Group**

Do something about the worship service times. No one seems happy with the schedule we currently are using. It's also hard for Sunday School classes. Services tend to run over the planned end time - conflicts with other schedules.

Everyone is going to have to be more flexible with service times.

How about a Saturday evening (6:00?) service? This has been successful at other churches. Maybe this could be our contemporary service and then have a traditional service on Sunday morning. Maybe we just need one service for awhile. We really liked having the whole congregation together at one time (Lunar Communion). We saw people we thought had left the church, but were just going to a different service.

**G3: Group - Small Group**

invite and encourage members to join us in activities

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

Again, this is not my task at church. However, if I learn of people who are unhappy I talk with them. In my experience, if people are unhappy, they just disappear, they don't usually seek out help.

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- In general, through personal relationships with as many as I can
- Try to notice when they have been missing and contact them
- Through the Care ministries – get others to contact them also
- Try to connect people with things going on in the church - i.e. small groups, committees, events, mission, outreach,
- Summer Spotlight.
- Working with the care team/deacons to improve our care ministry
- Mainly building connections & relationships

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

NA

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Within a 2 week period she contacts each kid to check up on them. Rotates through list every 2 weeks.

Gets the attendance report each Sunday and contacts kids who aren't coming to let them know they are missed. Talks to them at church if she sees them. She texts/emails Sr. highs - "I missed you today." when they don't show up.

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

The Music Ministry is regarded by many as one of the most successful parts of WPC life (The Fosters may not have mentioned this but it is a common theme in these interviews).

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

NA

**I2: Individual**

Friendship and Loyalty

**I3: Individual**

NA

**I4: Individual**

NA

**I5: Individual**

NA

**I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

NA

**I10: Individual**

- Get other people's ideas - should have opportunities to brainstorm. It is important to mix the groups of people - by ages, time they have been members, interests, etc., to see what people care about and want to change or have done.
- The names of committees need to be meaningful so that new people will know what they are. Instead of "Open Door" call it something like "New Member Class". These new names are catchy, but don't really say what they are.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

DRAFT

## ***D5: Question 2C - What do you do get back inactive members?***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

Keeping track of members that haven't been seen in a while.

Reach out to them via phone, mail.

Utilize the date last attended report to send a newsletter w/ a note, "miss seeing you".

Annual letter introducing self & zone to each member in the zone.

Cards-thinking of you, praying for you.

Maybe could enlist someone that knows an inactive member to contact that inactive member, rather than the deacon who doesn't necessarily know them.

Suggest asking the hard questions: (Haven't seen you in a while.

Is there a reason, will you share, how can I help you?

And if I can't help, is there someone who can? Would you like to talk to a pastor?)

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

Jim Young has called on several folks, but many are waiting until we have a permanent pastor.

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

Many of the same answers as A and B above can be used here.

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

Maybe we can meet with the Deacons to share information about members who have become inactive, to work together to reconnect members with the church and its activities again.

We might want to wait until we get our new pastor before trying to contact the inactive members.

We need to work with Dennis Waehner to pull some of the information like Date-Last-Attended which might be helpful in re-connecting inactive members.

Liked Fellowship Connections this summer. Some members came that have not been attending regularly.

### **C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Call ones who have not been there to tell them they have been missed.

Facebook, email, remind.com,

### **C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

Linda stays in touch with people who haven't been here or have left to go to other churches.

VBS can bring people back in

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

Roy calls members that have left every Sunday. He thinks between 67 and 59 members can be brought back in.

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

NA

**G2: Group - Small Group**

NA

**G3: Group - Small Group**

Telephoned those whom we knew personally

Sent a card to those we knew personally

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

This is difficult because people leave or stop attending weekly service for various reasons: they move, become sick, found a place better suited for them...

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- By working through the deacon board who receive a list of attendance each month. The deacons then contact them.
- Also, if I get a report @ someone who hasn't attended in awhile I'll give them a call. See how they're doing, if there's something I or the church can do.
- If notified, will call individual
- Sometimes difficult because people aren't always candid
- Encourage members to do the same things as well

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

NA

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Within first month as youth director she called youth and parents on the roster to tell them about herself and invite them back if they had not been coming. Asked the question, "What can we do to improve?"

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

Same as 2A. above – Music Ministry events can draw people back in.

Attracting, retaining and reclaiming members is the work of the Holy Spirit. Only through faith and prayer, can we be receptive ourselves to the Spirit's leading and facilitating of these things. This gets back to what we discussed about the centrality of a strong, connected, communal prayer life (see #3C below).

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

NA

**I2: Individual**

NA

**I3: Individual**

NA

**I4: Individual**

NA

**I5: Individual**

NA

**I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

NA

**I10: Individual**

- Have different members call and spend time visiting with them. Does not need to be their deacon, but maybe someone who had more personal contact with them. Send them cards that are warm and inviting -- we have missed you, come for specific event.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

## ***D6: Question 3A - Do you have ideas to explain membership changes?***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

NA

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

One member's experience:

- A. Early in my community work, my town opened a new library and we had publicity and then on opening day: signs, balloons and clowns greeting and steering people inside. Once people enter, they're apt to return. (WPC has gained members through funerals!).
- B. In past year's, WPC had a running agreement with Clear Creek Community Church to do their weddings as CCC doesn't have a center aisle (WPC stopped doing outside weddings).
- C. When Interfaith Ministries got its professional director, we went to UHCL for help and were given the plan devised for Gloria Dei which uses its sanctuary for all sorts of community events. (When the last pastor decided to curtail it, he was replaced.).
- D. When WPC opened its new sanctuary, the plan was to hold a series of welcoming events. It did not happen.

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

"I have heard many comments about changing the service time to 11:15 am, it feels imposed, unsettled."

Traditional vs. contemporary/blended problems may

"We changed at Woody's departure. There was an ugliness, a rift, and we have not had a pastor who would lead, unite, and comfort the church since then.

We are hard on pastors, we need to be a church for our pastors."

External reasons for loss / no new members:

PCUSA issues and all of the national publicity they brought. Churches are leaving our presbytery. Our congregation is more conservative than our leadership. We may need a forum for this area. WPC didn't let the church be affected by these social issues in the past, we focused on faith.

Our voice – the congregation needs to come together. The church has come from "everyone brings their gifts" in the 1<sup>st</sup> century of Christianity to "laity and clergy" later, and now with most items left to the clergy. We are trying to move back to "we all bring our gifts".

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

There's a saying that 20% are community attendees and 80% are pulpit attendees. The message from the pulpit is very important. The tone is very, very important. (Don't want to sound desperate for new members)

Main stream Protestant decline.

Economics – job changes and retirements with location moves

Family changes – kids are grown up now, time to do something different.

Habit changes – Attend a season of football on Sundays, when the season is over, the member just doesn't come back

Divisive issues – i.e. the Children’s School conflict.

If our congregation is too concentrated in one type of person (i.e., “young families”), it is difficult for those who don’t fit the dominant role to find a place to thrive.

Because of the way the news about Mark leaving was handled (i.e. “we can’t talk about it”), a lot of people became angry. Messaging is really, really important. Don’t like secrets!

Need leadership on how situations are handled – words can hurt – better messaging.

Lost young families.

Lost youth especially after Caressa left – youth look great at musical but many are friends or youth who do not participate in other activities.

#### **C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

No confirmation for 4 years

Head of staff position unstable

No staff member dedicated to the kids (before Jessie). Youth director after Caressa was a bad fit.

Re-routing of NASA Rd.1

NASA layoffs

Unhappy with PCUSA in general

#### **C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

Numbers in children's ministry has gone down. At a critical point where we don't have enough kids to sustain our programs. Not enough parents to help.

No pastor for the last 2 ½ years or more. When the school closed we lost members who have not come back. The youth pastor was eliminated. We lost the coordination between children and youth.

Single service (for whole summer) killed Sunday School

#### **C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

- i. The Membership Review Team began working about six years ago with Joyce Sens, Sandy Murphy, and Anne Waehner as some of the early participants. The mission was to purge the rolls as needed and begin to provide actual membership numbers. Hence, the reported numbers for 2009 and beyond are fairly accurate numbers. The numbers before 2010 were just guesses turned in by Jim Paden. Hence the monotonic decreasing trend seen from 2010 and beyond may actually have been the reality at least as far back as 2005. This would have lined up the start of the decreasing trend with the time when Woody Berry left. This team (and several others) have reported this event as the probable start of the membership decline. It could be noted that at least one couple left when Dean Woodruff left and still don’t want to go to church.
- ii. Ideas on membership changes are that people move out of the church for two big reasons:
  1. Moving away – left the area - more than half (approximately 60%)
  2. Moving on for multiple reasons but two classifications

- A. Out-grew the church (examples married into another church, kids in another church, etc.) – maybe 20% (these will be hard to get back)
  - B. Left for personal reasons such as (these are our best chance to bring back):
    - a. Lack of leadership
    - b. Message from the pulpit
    - c. Need more leadership positions
    - d. It's too easy to join the church/need to get people more involved
    - e. Mad at someone
    - f. Etc.
- iii. The local political climate was listed as one issue that might be affecting our membership (requiring a change in our focus), however this was countered with a statement that we cannot deny our corporate "soul" by giving up things that many feel we are called to do. General Assembly actions were discussed briefly in this context.

### **G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

The statement was made that "Every 500 years the Church of God undergoes a rummage sale." and Christianity in North America is now experiencing such a major shift.

A simple congregational lifecycle was provided as it progressed from Energy, Intimacy, Programs, Administration during its buildup phase. A long plateau after the church has come into its own follows. The decline has Energy/Vision loss, Intimacy loss, Program Loss, and then the question mark of what happens next.

This lifecycle was broken into four quadrants with the church beginning at quadrant 1, which is unsustainable. The above lifecycle then progresses through quadrants 2 and 3 during which the church is sustainable. Quadrant 4 is the latter part of the decline when the church becomes unsustainable again. It is interesting that when the WPC team asked the question of where we were on this scale, one person said near the boundary between 2 and 3 and the other four said on the sustainable side of the boundary between 3 and 4.

It was reported that the average congregation lives between 60 and 80 years without intervention. Presbyterian churches tend toward the higher end of that range. The WPC team felt like an "intervention" occurred for WPC due to the beginning of the Space Program in the early 60's.

### **G2: Group - Small Group**

Do something about the worship service times. No one seems happy with the schedule we currently are using. It's also hard for Sunday School classes. Services tend to run over the planned end time - conflicts with other schedules.

Everyone is going to have to be more flexible with service times.

How about a Saturday evening (6:00?) service? This has been successful at other churches. Maybe this could be our contemporary service and then have a traditional service on Sunday morning. Maybe we just need one service for awhile. We really liked having the whole congregation together at one time (Lunar Communion). We saw people we thought had left the church, but were just going to a different service.

### **G3: Group - Small Group**

NA

### **S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

Our church is a reflection of the larger culture – church is not as important in some people's lives as it once was. This is not unique. The year 2008 was difficult – the economic downturn and NASA downsizing has affected our membership. The congregation is comprised of fairly well educated people, older couples, and middle-aged with

their kids grown and gone. However, we don't have many young families. I think there is not enough critical mass to keep them here. Also, there are significant problems with the education wing, it is grim and needs a complete re-do.

WPC is a friendly church with pockets of problems – some people are overly-critical and have a hard time letting other people help with tasks they've done in past years. Territoriality is still an occasional problem.

As an Interim pastor, I know some people are unhappy with me, but that is expected.

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- National/worldwide trend away from church
- The idea that Christianity has the answers. Turns younger people away. Perception that church is dogmatic. Church that poses questions, not answering them, but this is not comfortable for many.
- Resistance to change; need to look at why the resistance and address it
  - Attitude of “this is my church & I want things done my way.” Can be unappealing to new people.
  - Attitude of “I want to feel comfortable”
  - Attitude of “Tell me about it and I will fix it...or not”
- WPC has bias about going out and talking to those outside of church about church
  - Need to improve discipleship/learning & deepening faith
    - Learning lacking; theologically shallow
- Problem with church “traditions.” Need to create new. This is nationwide also.
- Need to look at worship time alternatives to Sunday mornings
- WPC has wonderful people but huge gossip circle
- Pastors often don't hear what members are upset about with the Pastors
- Huge diversity – socioeconomic, political, gender vs. theology
- People think you're preaching on politics rather than theology.
- Webster has a bias @ going out & talking @ their faith & their church. w/ them.

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

NA

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

PCUSA church in general, no denominational loyalty anymore

Old ways don't work, Sunday School is archaic

Getting the church to change is a long, strenuous process

Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings are not sacred anymore. Used to be "church nights", but now sports events and other activities are scheduled then. Kids told if they miss the activity, they will fail the class -- so don't come to church.

Changes in NASA effected the community

Instability of our leadership

Nothing for Young Adults/College age

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

An article entitled “The Feminization of the Church” suggests that changes in Christianity over a long period of time that has made the church less appealing to men as it caters more to women. This change may have started as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century but really set in starting at the Industrial revolution. Gender imbalance in WPC membership, leadership and involvement may reflect this larger historical trend.

Sometimes our congregants will over-study something until the momentum is gone.

WPC is spread too thin and too many people are not showing up for events.

We may not even have 20% of the people doing the work, it may be more like 10%.

We have a prayer life disconnect.

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

NA

**I2: Individual**

NA

**I3: Individual**

- Let's ask them what would cause them to leave.
  - Generally, the reasons people frequent any business are many. The reasons that people stop frequenting a business are often fewer and share more commonality than the reasons people frequent a business.
  - In essence, the first thing we need to do is to stop doing things that are causing people to leave or never attend WPC. Almost all of these issues will be actionable. Some actions, however, may well be somewhat unpalatable.
- What about what other Churches do better?
  - Services?
  - Mission?
  - Facilities?
- Asking why people stay is one thing, but at this point we need to think about why people leave and why people attend other Churches.
- Once we know what we are doing wrong, we can stop doing those things.
  - Making past and potential members aware of things we don't do may be as beneficial as continuing to do the things we do well.
- Obvious questions that are not being asked:
  - Why do you think we are losing members?
  - If we are so great, why are we not attracting new members?
  - What would make you (personally) leave?
  - Think about the last person/member you know personally who left the Church. Why do you think they left?
  - Why do Christians new to the area choose another Church? What are those Churches doing that we are not?
- We are asking the wrong questions.

- We need to focus as much on the negative as the positive.
  - There may be more of an issue with why people leave than why people stay.
- We are asking questions to the wrong people or in the wrong situation/setting.
- External Factors
  - PCUSA
  - Location
  - Millennials don't attend Church in high numbers
- Internal Factors
  - Instability of Head of Staff
  - Condition of facilities
  - Lack of activities and offerings
  - Timing of services
- Have we hit the tipping point where our demise is inevitable?
  - Kids don't come to Sunday School 'cause there are too few kids in Sunday School
  - Are we in a downward spiral that is impossible to recover from?
  - Pastor nominating committee is moving too slowly
    - We have only a few years until we are done
    - Numbers from the treasurer show that we will average around 50 attending both services within five years
      - Certainly, by that time, we will be finished
      - How low can membership get before we can't recover?
      - We probably only have a couple of years...tops...

**I4: Individual**

A committed youth group is disappearing. There seems to be a generational switch within the youth. As a result, the smaller mission projects are disappearing leaving only the big mission trip.

Mission work provides instant visual feedback and enhances my relationship with God.

Mission work helps youth that are in their entitlement phase get back to reality.

Worship is not active enough to be fun for youth. One of a past sponsor's techniques for keeping youth engaged involved was mixing in action with discussion.

**I5: Individual**

NA

**I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

I see the Church as graying, membership declining, i.e. deaths, retirements, moving out of the area, more liberal views on sexuality, working class, and politics and lack of motivation and dedication, four preachers in the near past, no recognition of the Church on NASA Road One, and difficulty for new visitors to find the front of the Church because it is in the back.

We need younger families to carry on the work of the Church that's where a lot of effort should be.

**I10: Individual**

(Part of this addressed in first two questions.) When a church is without a pastor (Head of Staff) for a long time, they hesitate to get involved until the new pastor comes. Too much debt makes people uncomfortable - always asking for money. It's hard to always have to rebuild programs and membership. The Educational Building needs lots more attention - turns off young parents with children who are looking at other churches with so many nice facilities. The classrooms were really looking bad until the ladies came in and painted. Many hurdles with the Children's School because of the restrictions from state with certification. Lack of kitchen in the Fellowship Hall makes things difficult.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

There was a feeling that the church didn't even know I was still supporting local mission work for WPC when others dropped out.

We enjoyed different activities at church, but I can't say that we ever got to the point where we felt like we were truly a part of WPC - it just never really clicked for us, even after several years of membership.

The last function that I did a lot of responsibility to coordinate even though there were two of us. We had decided to start looking for another church after it was over.

Our kids had aged out of youth activities and we felt no pull to stay.

There was not one specific event that caused us to leave, but when Mark retired we weren't interested in listening to interim pastors for a couple of years.

**D2: Deacon Contact**

One of the big reasons D2 left was the children's program. D2 had taught middle school Sunday School for two years. During that time the emphasis in the program had changed from Sunday mornings to Wednesdays and Sunday afternoons. The kids who attended Sunday School in the mornings were rarely there because they wanted to be. Then last year a report came out from session of "things that need to die". One of the things on that list was ineffective Sunday School teaching. When I asked for clarification from members of session, I was told that it was not directed at me, but no other explanation was given as to what had "to die".

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

We may return after Helen Rose has left and a new pastor has been called, but it will really depend on who is called. If we do return I will probably not teach Sunday School again.

I hope this is the information you are looking for. My extended family is keeping me abreast of everything that has been going on. I have also been reading the monthly newsletters and church website.

**D3: Deacon Contact**

D3 has been attending WPC Sunday school but is going to church at Clear Lake Presbyterian because *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*. D3 will likely be back.

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

D4 is waiting for new minister.

D4 are gone from Thursday to Sunday every weekend.

D5 and D7 only attend Christmas & Easter.

D8 is not attending now but will be back "someday".

D9 is visiting other churches.

D10 lives in a retirement home but still drives - out of habit of attending church - likes to sleep in on Sunday mornings.

D11 has not attended worship services for quite awhile, but got the impression that they will be starting to come again. They participated in small groups and Sisters in Faith. They like the people in the church and have been thinking more about the spiritual nurturing that they want to provide for their son.

D12 returned the deacon introduction letter from earlier in the year along with a note that said they did not plan to attend church.

D13 haven't been to church services for quite a while, but is attending Young at Heart. They have a deep attachment to WPC and don't want to leave, but said the services don't seem to mean anything to them spiritually, so they are kind of waiting for the new pastor to come. They've done a little church shopping which was described as "a half-hearted attempt, but they said "we're not a church-hopping family" and they have a long and deep sentimental attachment to WPC. D13's deacon thinks they will come back. They seemed to know everything going on and is keeping in touch and was so sweet and kind, really sincere and hopeful for our church.

D14 have been extremely busy with traveling activities with the kids Sundays. After this year, most activities will be on Saturdays and they will be traveling less on Sundays. A second reason is that they are waiting to see the new Senior Pastor in the church. They did not think the search would go as long as it has. Mark Cooper was really gifted with his sermons and they missed listening to his Sunday messages. They hope the search for the new Senior pastor is concluded soon. Having visiting pastors for as long as we have seen is not good for continuity within the church.

## ***D7: Question 3B - Do you have ideas to attract new members?***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

When take stuff over to the hospital for care & engage in conversation with anyone in the waiting room.

Offer the goodies to them.

Would you like me to pray for your loved one?

Add a business card to the basket or a tri-fold with our programs.

However, hospital may frown upon.

Need to be more consistent with advertising/stories/special events.

Things being submitted but may not be printed?

Ask, may I pick you up & bring you to church?

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

- A. Fall festival;
- B. Outward Looking;
- C. Media;
- D. Learn about Church;
- E. Communicate to Public;
- F. Brochures for Chamber of Commerce Racks;
- G. New Program Endorsements;
- H. Easter, Xmas, Seasonal, Children's Service Promotionals – example: Easter Eggs with invitations inside;
- I. Bring-a-Friend;
- J. Exterior Displays;
- K. Public Announcements such as “Meet the Loving People of WPC” or testimonials;
- L. Introduce the New Pastor Campaign;
- M. Door Hangers;
- N. Real Estate Welcome Kits;
- O. Concert in the park – door prizes
- P. Social Media;
  - a. Facebook,
  - b. Google Plus & Coupon;
- Q. 50<sup>th</sup> Lunar Communion Celebration;
  - a. Publicity
  - b. Lunar Festival
  - c. Science vs. Religion
  - d. Apostles of Apollo Book Signing;
- R. Move Church out of the Building – other points of access to WPC;
  - a. Music,
  - b. Study Groups,
  - c. Youth Programs,
  - d. Theology on Tap,
  - e. Etc.
- S. Add Green Component to Facilities;
- T. Yard Signs;
- U. Start at the beginning - Perform SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis with a Larger Church Group than just Session; and
- V. Add Outreach Component to Other Groups Activities.
- W. One member's experience;

- a. Early in my community work, my town opened a new library and we had publicity and then on opening day: signs, balloons and clowns greeting and steering people inside. Once people enter, they're apt to return. (WPC has gained members through funerals!).
- b. In past year's, WPC had a running agreement with Clear Creek Community Church to do their weddings as CCC doesn't have a center aisle (WPC stopped doing outside weddings).
- c. When Interfaith Ministries got its professional director, we went to UHCL for help and were given the plan devised for Gloria Dei which uses its sanctuary for all sorts of community events. (When the last pastor decided to curtail it, he was replaced.).
- d. When WPC opened its new sanctuary, the plan was to hold a series of welcoming events. It did not happen.

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

We need to develop an understanding of what outreach means, and then go after it.

What does it mean to be truly inclusive? Charging \$\$ for VBS is an example – how does charging for VBS alter our path toward outreach in the community?

We need to look at each act or decision through our faith.

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

Start new with new pastor – totally different – come back

Something different??

Has to be personal – word of mouth is how you sell stuff and how you grow a church

Events like Meet the Composer with other churches – get our name out there and get guests to visit our church – put stained glass brochures in pews for guests

Mission/Outreach with other churches

Form a multi-church handyman group that goes around and fixes things in all the churches – build community among other churches and get people involved/engaged.

### **C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Magnetic signs for the vans - more visible

Water bottles, shirts, Agape bags

Rebuild the education wing

Signs throughout the building to let people know where things are.

Sell the building and move to a new location; might be cheaper than trying to rebuild areas.

Community churches are packed.

Have church members outside with signs to attract people.

### **C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

More concerts/events (Free the Captives) open to the public to bring people into the church.

Focus on special needs families. Could be a real niche for us. We have good role models - Sonya, Steven - who are accepted and not treated differently.

Start a MOPS group, Mother's Day Out program (need workers), after school care/ homework time for community kids and our own members' kids.

You need kids to attract kids. Young families - numbers are a critical thing. Need more (parents and kids) for a strong program.

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

- A. Significant discussion was held on the mission activities of the church. A significant statement was that WPC doesn't get credit for a lot of the mission work that it does. Mission is seen as happening in two areas – here and elsewhere. It might be advantageous to show what we are doing in the bulletin as one approach to enhance our messaging.
- B. Also, we might re-do the budget to set a goal to tithe for mission. It was noted that mission should include everything that is done for mission (e.g. youth mission activities, VBS mission, etc.).
- C. There was some discussion on the need to provide active involvement mission activities for those that crave that as well as money-for-mission activities for those that prefer.
- D. There was an idea to add some opening to current or new covenant groups for younger groups.

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

NA

**G2: Group - Small Group**

Debbie Schultz talked about how Steven gets people coming up to him and commenting every time he wears his WPC T-shirt. Seriously! They always use that to start conversations. He loves his shirt and wears it often. She says he'd wear it every Sunday if she'd let him. We need that visible identity in the community. Wear our shirts out. Maybe order more. People need to know we are here!

Boy/Girl Scout groups. We used to have them. It is a good way to get people to realize that we are here and to come inside our church.

We really need more community events - we have no support groups to attract people. (Need things like: divorce care, grief groups, alcohol/drug addiction groups, caregivers support groups, etc.)

Need to use our gifts within our community unrelated to worship - bridge, book clubs, parenting classes, crafts, maybe adult drama group or more storytelling activities.

Need to bring in things like speakers and music programs to get people to visit our church and see what is going on.

**G3: Group - Small Group**

NA

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

NA

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- By offering attractive things like a financial freedom seminar, grief share, open up to AA groups, treat our whole campus as a community resource, book signings, art fair & let them sell them!
- Do the type of things that get the community's attention & get them in the door. Living the question seminar w/ dinner & a small cost. (Video based series). Summer spotlight.
- 2 big weekends a year (with one inside focus and one outside focus):
  - 1) Spiritual Renewal weekend
  - 2) Attracting new members

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

NA

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Need to be able to stream worship and Sunday School for those who can't come. We should be in the world but not of it. Watching on the website brings people into not out of church.

Need a really strong social presence - Facebook, Twitter, webpage. The sign is just a joke and a waste of money. Doesn't do any good.

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

Start a church-wide men's ministry.

Have a minister that can relate to men.

Some statistics show that three times as many kids stay in church as they get older if the father attends church as opposed to just the mother.

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

NA

**I2: Individual**

NA

**I3: Individual**

- What about what other Churches do better?
  - Services?
  - Mission?
  - Facilities?
- Again, asking why people stay is one thing. We really, at this point, need to think about why people leave. We need to think about why people attend other Churches.
- Once we know what we are doing wrong, we can stop doing those things.
  - Making past and potential members aware of things we don't do may be as beneficial as continuing to do the things we do well.
- Obvious questions that are not being asked:
  - Why do you think we are losing members?

- If we are so great, why are we not attracting new members?
- What would make you (personally) leave?
- Think about the last person/member you know personally who left the Church. Why do you think they left?
- Why do Christians new to the area choose another Church? What are those Churches doing that we are not?
- I love going to Synod with the youth.
  - Synod is great because of the small groups.
  - Services are OK, but are not the primary draw.
  - Is it possible that we need to focus more on small group-like things (Sunday School, etc.)? Is it possible that Sunday services are one of the least important aspects of our Church?

**I4: Individual**

NA

**I5: Individual**

NA

**I6 & I7: Individual**

There are three major areas of concern:

- A. Lack of coordination and communication between Youth and Children's Ministry as well as with parents
- B. Lack of planning and organization in Children's Ministry (because of Linda)
- C. Lack of child care for young parents even when told it would be available

A.1. When Caressa was here, she met with Youth Ministry Planning Team as well as Children's Team to coordinate events for the calendar (usually 3 months at a time). There was also a Christian Nurture team to oversee these programs and keep them working together. Once Caressa left all of that stopped. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

A.2 Confirmation has been a problem because of this. For three full years, they did not have confirmation. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

A.3. The changes in the service times are really not working. Sunday School is being squeezed. Young families who are coming back to church because of their children expect to take them to Sunday School before church. Want them to be involved in age-appropriate activities to help grow their faith. Do not need to be using technology all the time. They have it at home (and school) and parents are trying to limit its use as it is. We really need to rethink what we are doing and what we want to accomplish.

A.4 Where was the decision made to change from Rally Day (which really involved the whole church) to Spirit Day which didn't even really involve the children? It was not effective.

B1. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

B2. Many people at early service would like some option for their children instead of child care -- no Children's Chapel at early time. There seems to be a disconnect between the lesson/scripture and the follow-up activities. Just not making the connections clear to the children.

B3. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

*C. [Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

*C.1. [Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

*C.2. [Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

C.2. How is it funded? Who pays the workers -- the committee hosting the event or does it always come out of Children's budget?

C.3. If all scheduled child care comes out of Children's budget, then their budget needs to be increased to cover the demand. Some parents would probably even be happy to pay something if they could leave their children there in a familiar place with workers they already know. Always seems to be a turnover of workers. They get frustrated too.

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

Need dynamic, energized, charismatic leader who takes the initiative to step out of the box, not an administrator, more preacher interaction with the sick, aged, and committees, new visitors, clubs, rotary, Lions, etc.

**I10: Individual**

We need newspaper ads to let people know we are here and what is going on at our church. More technology - social networking to attract younger people.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

***D8: Question 3C - Do you have ideas to address membership in general?***

**C1: Committee - Deacons**

NA

**C2: Committee - Outreach**

- A. Fall festival;
- B. Outward Looking;
- C. Media;
- D. Learn about Church;
- E. Communicate to Public;
- F. Brochures for Chamber of Commerce Racks;
- G. New Program Endorsements;
- H. Easter, Xmas, Seasonal, Children's Service Promotionals – example: Easter Eggs with invitations inside;
- I. Bring-a-Friend;
- J. Exterior Displays;
- K. Public Announcements such as “Meet the Loving People of WPC” or testimonials;
- L. Introduce the New Pastor Campaign;
- M. Door Hangers;
- N. Real Estate Welcome Kits;
- O. Concert in the park – door prizes
- P. Social Media;
  - a. Facebook,
  - b. Google Plus & Coupon;
- Q. 50<sup>th</sup> Lunar Communion Celebration;
  - a. Publicity
  - b. Lunar Festival
  - c. Science vs. Religion
  - d. Apostles of Apollo Book Signing;
- R. Move Church out of the Building – other points of access to WPC;
  - a. Music,
  - b. Study Groups,
  - c. Youth Programs,
  - d. Theology on Tap,
  - e. Etc.
- S. Add Green Component to Facilities;
- T. Yard Signs;
- U. Start at the beginning - Perform SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis with a Larger Church Group than just Session; and
- V. Add Outreach Component to Other Groups Activities.
- W. One member's experience:
  - a. Early in my community work, my town opened a new library and we had publicity and then on opening day: signs, balloons and clowns greeting and steering people inside. Once people enter, they're apt to return. (WPC has gained members through funerals!).
  - b. In past year's, WPC had a running agreement with Clear Creek Community Church to do their weddings as CCC doesn't have a center aisle (WPC stopped doing outside weddings).
  - c. When Interfaith Ministries got its professional director, we went to UHCL for help and were given the plan devised for Gloria Dei which uses its sanctuary for all sorts of community events. (When the last pastor decided to curtail it, he was replaced.).
  - d. When WPC opened its new sanctuary, the plan was to hold a series of welcoming events. It did not happen.

**C3: Committee - Communications**

As the church changes, we need to stay focused on people and outreach, not on the buildings.

We haven't been preparing in the interim phase. There's a sense of standing back, no one wants to be invested.

Previous church-home meetings had mixed results. Mark led them, but he didn't do anything with the information. He was a great preacher, but not a good leader.

There is mistrust of leadership in the church (local, regional, national), we are hanging back, we are not part of the process, were just told what is going on. We are in discomfort, and we need healing.

We are afraid of embracing a new head pastor and then being hurt. We hope people will have a voice in what we're doing with this (current) survey. Communication will be key.

**C4: Committee - Welcoming**

We have the bones to be a welcoming place to worship and grow in faith. Here's what visitors we have tried to introduce have said:

Needs more spirit. First Light service isn't drawing members that enliven the service. Many families are drawn to churches in which praise music and more youth involvement occurs. We assume that the majority of those attending the early service like the early time. However, they are Seniors who are early risers. Perhaps we could change the time so more families can attend, this would be helpful.

An idea is to have a committee ranging in ages go out and visit the congregations that are attracting membership. The purpose is to see what they are doing that helps the church thrive and grow. Then, with ideas that WPC can incorporate, we need to market our changes, since the community already has a preconceived idea of our congregation.

**C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Need to attract young families. Youth hinges on a really strong Children's program. Need to get the children and families involved and engaged.

Advertise in local parent/child magazines (to attract families with young children who might want to go back to church). Direct mail/flyers to young families.

Need to stay within time limits of services! Shorten the sermon, prayers, and sing 2 verses of a song instead of 4. First service runs late, so Sunday School runs late, and attendees get short changed. Run late to second service - which also gets out late.

What do visitors (especially with children) think of services going over time? Makes it hard for parents to plan rest of their day. Really amounts to poor planning.

**C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

Need a more active Nurture committee - staff needs to back off and let parents come in. Have a "super committee" to coordinate the functions of children, youth, and adult programs.

Discussion on contemporary vs. traditional services has not included children and parents. Assumptions are made that young families want the contemporary service, while really some want the traditional. Want kids to learn the old songs and creeds. Will fall back on these for life.

Need to remove restrictions that keep youth from working with children - not allowed. Need more flexibility.

Poor attendance in Sunday School, but good on Wednesday night. Kids are in church, but don't come to Sunday School.

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

- A. 26% of the members are over 65 and it was pointed out that we need to provide that group with the proper support.
- B. There was an idea to have a committee of around 10 people to make dedicated calls to people that have left the church or in danger of leaving. This activity would begin by hosting a luncheon and assigning call lists. One focus would be to discuss the fact that new leadership is expected in the near future. It was pointed out the Deacons are engaged in such an activity.

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

The New Beginnings Assessment has four steps:

1. A one day assessment visit;
2. A Friday/Saturday Leader Training;
3. Six weeks of house meetings; and
4. A bold decision making process that will take an indeterminate amount of time.

The one day assessment includes a one hour property tour, a one hour windshield tour, a 45 min meeting the financial officers, a discussion about the church calendar, a dinner with the pastor and one or two lay leaders, and an inquiry session with the congregation.

The leader training is a weekend retreat with other congregations in the area going through the program. It is interesting to note that the session beginning in early 2015 will be the first one where churches of all three denominations will be going through the program together. This training is for 8-12 lay leaders. A review of the assessment report is performed. There is also training for small group meetings and a chance to network with other church leaders.

The house meetings involve at least 50% of the congregation and are small group meetings led by the trained lay leaders. This six week process is targeted to leading the church to make a bold decision about the future of the church.

The entire process takes from 4 to 6 months, although implementing the bold decision may take an indeterminate amount of time. Examples of bold decisions that other churches in the program made include: embracing entirely new missions and congregants, selling property and moving the church, starting a new congregation while allowing the current congregation to die peacefully in place, closing the church, etc.

**G2: Group - Small Group**

NA

**G3: Group - Small Group**

- Encourage small group participation!
- To keep members from “burning out”, we should be tapping into the membership outside of the usual “doers”. Definitely ask within 6-9 months after someone has joined to get involved in some way.
- Reassess the programs of the church and what it takes to run them. Make sure we are not wearing folks thin when we would prefer an emphasis somewhere else.

- An observation: Our church leadership is active in the evenings between the hours of 6:00 - 9:00. Participation is active during daytime hours during the week. Those in our group who are not employed are often asked to take part in both evening and daytime commitments. Those who are employed felt that many opportunities to participate happen during the daytime hours and they felt left out.

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

NA

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

Need to engage people in discipleship

- Existing Membership
- Young Adult class
- Help parents grow in faith
- Young Couples
- Adult Ministry programs

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

As a church we have failed to prioritize maintaining relationships with teens who graduate and need to make sure we are meeting the needs of today's young families.

People with newborns don't want to stick kids in a nursery - want to keep them in worship with them unless they get active and noisy. Studies show that children do better in church when they are in the front - can see better. Feel like when they have done that, they are frowned upon. Members need to ask them to sit with them and take them down to the front - to show we like/want children. Say "I like to see children in church!" Nurture new people, make them feel welcome, invite them to go drink coffee or something after the service. Actively talk to them.

We need a small group for young parents.

Parents only want to give one hour on Sunday morning - that's all. Sunday School is dead for parents. It's the only good time on the weekend to have bonding time. They are trying to figure out how to make it work.

Children's Ministry is not about Sunday School or child care - it's about forming their faith, making disciples. We need to do things at different times and even different locations -- like Starbucks or Cracker Barrel -- to have faith formation.

Sunday morning schedule kills Sunday School. They come in late (10:45) or just won't attend. We reach a point where there are just not enough kids at each level if new ones don't come in.

Want church to be whole. Need active participation with adults (older group) playing games or working on the computer with the children.

Could have parents and kids in Sunday School together - then parents go to church, kids go to Children's Chapel

Need new ways to meet changing trends of kids learning styles.

Activities like the mural project where everyone is invited to work together.

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Need a full time Tech person on staff for AV, publishing, etc.

Scheduling problems with the calendar - Youth activities "kicked off" and other things scheduled in their times

Everything overlaps. 1/2 of the parents come and are involved and the other 1/2 don't

Difficult to coordinate with head of staff and children's coordinator

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

We need fewer task forces and studies that take too long and don't go anywhere. Sometimes we just need to decide to do something (when the solution is obvious and there is already consensus) and jump out and do it. We lack a general feeling of empowerment. Starting a contemporary worship service was a critical example. We should have just taken a leap of faith and done it – instead of studying it until momentum was lost.

We need church-wide activities/events that have a spiritual focus.

We need a renewed emphasis on bible study.

WPC should start over, have a renewal, other denominations might call for a revival, something like the New Beginnings Assessment.

WPC should have a deliberate period of preparation and actively plan for the arrival of the pastor.

Let's ask what we think the people of WPC in 2020 would say to the people of WPC in 2014.

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

1. We might have better luck attracting Deacons if we allow couples or pairs to share a deacon position.
2. Some deacons and zone members might need alternative communication methods that are more lifestyle appropriate.
3. Members of a specific Deacon Zone might provide information on who their personal network connections are at church. This information could be used to enhance a deacon's ability to reach a zonal member to check on them even using this network as surrogate contacts.
4. Several years ago, Clear Lake Presbyterian undertook an activity to look at how several area churches implemented the role of the deacon, we might draw off of that knowledge base or perform a similar fact-finding activity.
5. An idea that was proposed was to have a group meet periodically to discuss who might be moving into inactivity and need a contact. This group would include the pastors, select regular attendees of the two services, a deacon rep, reps from the three nurture teams, and someone holding the worship pad info. This group would rotate on a fairly short time frame.

**I2: Individual**

- A. Increase quality of worship services
  - a. Decrease down-time and inappropriate silences
  - b. More connectivity
  - c. More communication
- B. A/V should be more connected
- C. More Communication
- D. Add a young adult program including bible study
- E. For new members – establish a core group of people to always be involved

- F. Advertise
- G. Use the website more effectively
- H. Have more community events such as a BBQ's or events for anyone and everyone.
- I. Regarding the Children's Ministry planning for Vacation Bible School, Outreach should publicize it in the Community Monthlies, and perhaps advertise in local Parenting Magazine.

### **I3: Individual**

Extracted from the complete response that is provided below:

- Is our problem lack of exposure? Do people even know we are here?
- If people know we are here, why are they not choosing us?
- Tracking of membership issues
  - It is obvious that we don't do a great job of tracking who is/is not attending. This needs to change.
  - It is obvious we don't have a good way of recognizing when a member has left the Church. This also needs to change.
    - This is crucial as these are the people that absolutely need to be queried.
    - Why do they leave?
- Demographic Trends (Including Location Issues)
  - We can't change these...but we can react to them. We need, first, to gather information.
  - Target individuals who are:
    - Having their first child
    - Recently married
    - Recently moved to the area
    - Broad advertising (other than direct contact) will be mostly useless and a waste of money.
- PCUSA Issues
  - Do we need to consider moving to ECO?
  - If not, do we need to address issues with Presbytery?
  - If other local Churches leave PCUSA (e.g. First Presbyterian) is this an opportunity for us if we stay with PCUSA?
- Location
  - Do we need to consider moving the Church?

### **I4: Individual**

The sermons are an important part of the membership experience. A sermon should provide additional questions as well as answers. Dissecting a scripture is an important part of a good sermon. For youth a sermon should be easy to follow and stop when it starts to lose them. In the past a family experience was talking about the sermon at lunch and going over the questions.

Another important aspect of the success of the past youth programs was trust in the leaders and the pastor. Trust translates into the ability to say things. Leader trust was easy as the leaders were those that wanted to work with the youth. However, trust in and interest by the pastor were critical to the relationship and to getting the youth interested in the church beyond PYC. The youth are pretty good at telling if a pastor is really interested in working with them or not. I4 thinks back to Woody as the last pastor that connected with the youth.

An important way to look at it is little group (like a small group discussion, Sunday School, Youth group, one on one) vs. big group (church, mixed generation discussions, multi church groups). We want youth to be able to operate at both levels and a good relationship with the pastors helps this. Other ways to enhance this are to give the youth some big group responsibilities (youth committee and ordained positions are an obvious examples). Another aspect is to make sure that older generations have a chance to show the youth that they like them and appreciate them. The last statement is basically to bring back the family feel to WPC.

A sense of connectivity was talked about several times in relation to how important it is in bringing in and keeping young adults. I4 felt connected as a youth and felt connected in the college church, When asked what other area churches (besides WPC) that I4 might feel connected with the following were listed: Clear Lake Presbyterian, Nassau Bay Baptist, and Bay Harbor Methodist. Part of what produces connectivity is being discussion based sessions.

The sanctuary can seem a little sterile to new visitors. Maybe we need more art or pictures to show who we are and give folks a little more sense that someone lives here. The old sanctuary felt a little more inviting in some ways. Maybe it was the wood grain or the lower ceilings or the beams, or just being smaller. Might have some showcase for what the youth and the children do. The people need to exude a sense that they are happy to be here and not feel like robots. Even small mementos that give a sense of what the people are about would help.

Maybe a young adult (post-college) group would help.

I4 hasn't read the mission or vision statements but understand that they are long and not clear. I4 has heard that they are designed not to offend anyone and as a result don't really say anything.

#### **15: Individual**

- Media Director (part time)
  - Cannot do this on a volunteer basis much longer
  - Need someone to lead the volunteers
  - Knowledgeable about Social Media options
- Strengthen Spiritual Foundation
- Look closely at how we deal with finances
- Look closely at staffing
  - Do we have the right people in the right positions?
  - *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*
  - *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

#### **16 & 17: Individual**

1. Many young families who have left were life-long Presbyterians. They were looking for a traditional (not contemporary) service for their families. They seem to feel we are trying too hard to not be traditional - throwing out the baby with the bath water!! Doing things that many are really not comfortable with -- how to greet people in Peru, holding hands with people and making affirmations while looking in their eyes, etc. Want familiar songs, creeds we know, familiar parts of the service. Things need to be done repeatedly for people to become comfortable with them. They like having the quiet time and time for prayer. Really do not like the hymn selections! (not just the new songs --)
2. Let parents know when there are issues or problems that come up. Wait until last minute and try to find a solution. Keep parents informed. (TV not anchored to cart - parents were not told. They mounted TV on wall when they found out.)
3. The bathrooms between the Sunday School rooms cannot be used. This is a real problem for the 3-4 year olds who are not potty trained or are in the process of being potty trained.
4. Would really like to see Mission projects for the whole family to participate in. It is important to teach children that we have to give back and help other people. Need to do more than bag rice and beans. Maybe Crop Walk for the whole family?
5. It's taken so long for us to get a new minister. Many people are still members, but are just floating around or not going to church at all. Waiting to see what happens.

6. Really need a person as a go-between to coordinate/mediate Youth and Children's ministry. Need a strong Christian Nurture team.
7. Thought some of the services for Advent/Lent were not effective. Why have cookies and milk for communion on Christmas Eve (??) when the kids are used to participating in regular communion already. Wanted a service where they could sing traditional carols with the kids (early service) and have some quiet time also. Retell the Christmas story -- not just fun and games.
8. Need to work on our Facebook page and keep it current. Younger parents communicate this way. Would be a good way to talk about our VBS or other special programs.
9. Problem with not being able to have meetings on Wednesday nights anymore. That was perfect for many families, because there was child care provided and they even didn't have to cook. Many groups are having difficulties with this decision. There has been talk about forming a Covenant group for young parents, which could be held on Wednesday night. Now can't do that. Is this set in stone?
10. There is obviously friction between the staff members which is causing problems across the board. Do not work together to try and coordinate the activities of these groups.

**I8: Individual**

1. General: A good approach is to examine all the changes that our Interim has made over the past 21 months. Goal: Reverse most of them, since they obviously have not worked -- witness the decline in attendance, pledges, and revenue (contributions.)
2. Specific Actions:
  - a. Install a good leader: one who preaches uplifting, inspiring sermons, and respects the role of WPC leaders, e.g. Session, Deacons, and other volunteers. Stop the heavy-handed over-reaching tactics, and stop the vindictive actions against those who disagree with her.
  - b. Ignore/Rescind/Treat With "Beguine Neglect" the SATF findings for the most part, except for the goal of more transparency re Session actions and Financial "How-goes-it" metrics.
  - c. Reinstate the S&F Committee under a strong Chairman with the requisite financial and management skills and background. Do not fix "what ain't broke."
  - d. Session: Shore up Session management practices.
  - e. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*
  - f. Cancel recent changes to WPC By-Laws which strengthened the role of the Head of Staff -- e.g., responsibility to name the *members* of Session committees. This role belongs to each Session Committee Chairman.
  - g. "Stop the bleeding." One estimate is that 167 members have left WPC -- at least temporarily. See metrics of attendance, pledges, and contributions. Encourage (and fund) a vigorous *Outreach Program*. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*
  - h. Encourage the Head of Staff to more fully utilize our Youth Minister, e.g., allow her to preach sermons on a rotational basis -- say once a quarter. Better use her skills and allow her to grow.

- i. Encourage the Communications Committee to inform all members (target recent drop-outs) that we have a new Pastor -- a new day is dawning and give us another chance. "Come back, Shane!"

**I9: Individual**

Need a reinvigorated grounds committee.

Have the preacher make a personal call on inactive members and hopefully a short visit.

Challenge everyone to ask a friend, neighbor, stranger or coworker to visit the Church, have the preacher personally follow up with all visitors and invite them back.

**I10: Individual**

People are not posting things on the calendar or it is not being used correctly. Activities have to be cancelled or moved because two things are scheduled at the same time. The secretary needs to be informed and communicate to members what is going on. The minister needs to let the secretary have the privilege of getting calls and posting important events on the church calendar. Communication is so important. Can't do anything about problems unless they know what is happening. He needs an open door policy so he can get to know members and they feel comfortable talking to him about issues. Committee chairs should give him a written report to help let him know what is going on. He will need a grace period to get acclimated. Helen Rose really cleared the way for him. She handled some situations that needed to be handled involving people and cliques that needed to be broken up or removed from power. Really need to go out of our way to involve the new minister's wife and make her feel welcome. Find out her interests and get her involved with other people who share those interests - not only in the church, but also in her new community.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

I do appreciate you following up with us to ask why we left.

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

## ***D9: Question 4 - What other groups do you work with regarding membership?***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

Overlap with Welcoming Committee on new member receptions.

Sister-in-Faith overlap by inviting visitors to join.

Overlap with adult education to invite visitors to Sunday School.

Invite people to come to musical events, so overlap with Choir.

Interact with Fellowship Connections.

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

- A. Mission
- B. Communication
- C. Other's mentioned as possible collaborators including Youth, Children, and Worship.
- D. Examples: Regarding the Children's Ministry planning for Vacation Bible School - Outreach should publicize it in the Community Monthlies, and perhaps advertise in local Parenting Magazine.

Note: Last year's Strategic Analysis Task Force Report notes the 'territorial' aspects of WPC's committees however much overlapping work is called for.

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

There was no direct response to this question but in conversation it came out that the Communications Committee can and should work with every group in the church.

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

Deacons – retaining inactive members and returning them to active membership. Include deacons in New Member Receptions.

I.T. / Waehner – develop some reports might be helpful to understand who's coming in the door.

Worship Committee – combined usher and host training.

Outreach Committee (Jim Young) - report from visitor database.

Mission – new member interested in Habitat – connect them with that group

Stewardship – provide new member time & talent forms. Form is awkward and needs to be reworked. Secretary puts it in appropriate elder box. Are we asking about Meals on Wheels and giving to Alberta? Habitat? etc.?

### **C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

VBS

Children's ministry - VBS, Summer Spotlight

Mission - Youth in charge of Crop Walk

**C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

- Mission
- Work more with Youth - need Christian Nurture
- Outreach - join with children and youth
- Need to have parent volunteers as representatives on
- other committees

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

The group that collects and tallies the pew pads. Anne Waehner takes this information to the Deacons. The Deacons do try and contact those folks that have stopped coming. Anne also takes feedback from the Deacons to the Membership Review Committee.

There is sometimes feedback from covenant groups.

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

NA

**G2: Group - Small Group**

We really don't.

One member works with Open Door classes to talk about covenant groups, but that is as an individual - not as a member of our group.

**G3: Group - Small Group**

- Wednesday morning group
- Deacons
- Hospital visitation

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

Again, this is not my area of focus. However, I have worked with the Board of Deacons and taught Tuesday Morning Bible Study.

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- Welcome – Host, Connection & Engaging Teams
- Outreach – first for Jesus and second our community of faith
  - VBS
  - Communicate Senior Ministry luncheons to those outside congregation
- Deacons
- Community Assistance
- Adult Ministries

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

Church staff - planning, calendar

Outreach (planning team)

Advent (planning team)

Lent (planning team)

Mission - it would be great if we had CMT members on other committees. Family mission projects would be wonderful.

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Attendance people send out names

Mission - Youth help with Summer Spotlight, Seafarer's boxes, Souper Bowl of Caring, Free the Captives, Crop Walk

We have a youth elder, youth deacon, and youth member of the nominating committee. So we work with those groups.

Outreach - Palm Sunday

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

Communication, Outreach

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

NA

**I2: Individual**

NA

**I3: Individual**

NA

**I4: Individual**

NA

**I5: Individual**

NA

**I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

NA

**I10: Individual**

Young @ Heart - invite people to participate in these activities

Bible study

Bridge group - we really need more things going on at church to draw more people from outside to participate.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 - 14: Deacon Contact**

NA

DRAFT

***D10: Question 5 - Do you have suggestions for other individuals or groups to interview?***

**C1: Deacons**

Tuesday Morning Bible Studies

Sylvia Kinzler

The Presbytery - Mike Cole

**C2: Committee - Outreach**

NA

**C3: Committee - Communications**

People who have moved away but still view WPC as “their church”:

Utterback’s, Julie Yencharis (Fredericksburg), Mike & Connie Carden, Carl & Jackie Allen, Clay & Susan Anderson, Carlos & Wendy Noriega, Massey family, Doug McCann, Riley family, Chris Kidwell family

The Moede’s (Chuck, Nina, and Melissa) - before they leave

**C4: Committee - Welcoming**

Interview young people (defined as “anyone younger than you are.”)

Interview guests

Interview selected confirmands

Young - Marco Balletto, Catherine Spivey, Shelby McNeill, Marshall Godwin, Katie Grady

New members – Marsha Millsap, Patty Tremble

Recently inactive members

**C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Interview the people who have left. The ones who are here like it or have decided to stay, or they would not still be here.

**C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

- More parents
- Sarah Frey, Hillary McLellan, Laura Shipman - who have all left the church. Reasons why?
- Mission Committee - activities like Crop Walk are good for the whole family to participate

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

NA

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

Other churches that have gone through the program.

**G2: Group - Small Group**

Maybe we should be talking to other churches who have successful programs for getting people in from the community.

CL Pres has found a niche with the home-schooled group. They offer Bible study during the day for the parents while the kids do activities. They also have a nursery school program for Hispanic children in the neighborhood.

Gloria Dei has many groups they bring in for entertainment and education.

**G3: Group - Small Group**

NA

**S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

I suggest you interview parents of children

Betty Geehan

The youth group

The Bridge group – comprised of current and ex-member. This might bring an outside perspective.

**S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

- Children's teachers who have left the church or have just quit teaching
- Children's parents who have left the church
- Parents of children who don't or no longer come for Sunday School
- Members on the fringes
- Members who have left
  - If joined another church, what attracted you to that church and why?
  - If not joined, what will interest you enough to come back?
  - What could we do different?
- Those coming to worship but not truly engaged in other parts of the church
  - What will help you engage?
- Women's Retreat Planning Team
- Andersons, McLellans, Freys, Kidwells, Rileys, Merritts, Bonas

**S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

Young parents - Boyers, Barbozas, Anya - casual discussion, not one-on-one

People who have left

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

- Jennifer Paden,
- Sarah Cravens,

- Michelle Dupont,
- Katie Grady,
- Peter and Michael Tobia,
- Amy and Michael Waehner,
- recent graduates,
- the Sr. High group

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

The article previously mentioned entitled “The Feminization of the Church, Why Its Music, Messages and Ministries Are Driving Men Away”, By Holly Pivec for the Biola University Magazine

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

The current or past Nominating Committees

**I2: Individual**

NA

**I3: Individual**

Extracted from the complete response that is provided below:

- We are surveying the wrong group(s) and the wrong individuals.
  - Of course the people who are still at WPC have positive things to say.
    - Survey current members of any Church and you will find the same thing.
    - There is nothing we are going to come away with that is actionable from our questioning of these groups unless we ask them:
      - Have you thought about leaving WPC? Why/why not?
      - Do you know an individual or family that has left WPC? Why did they leave?
  - Real need is to survey the following:
    - Individuals/families that have left the Church (members and non-members that attended regularly).
    - Individuals in the community that attend another Presbyterian Church in the area, but do not attend WPC.
    - Individuals (Christians) that don't attend any Church.
- Clearly those that are still here like WPC.
- Again, let's ask them what would cause them to leave.
  - Generally, the reasons people frequent any business are many. The reasons that people stop frequenting a business are often fewer and share more commonality than the reasons people frequent a business.
  - In essence, the first thing we need to do is to stop doing things that are causing people to leave or never attend WPC. Almost all of these issues will be actionable. Some actions, however, may well be somewhat unpalatable.

**I4: Individual**

Youth leaders from her time: Watson Dupont and Dennis Waehner.

Maybe some other young adults with youth experience in this church (Katie Grady, Steven Schulz, Elizabeth Noriega).

**I5: Individual**

- Doug & Sharon McCann
  - Mike & Connie Carden
  - Terrell McMillan
  - Alberta Rohlfing
  - Kevin Snowden
  - Wed. Morning Bible Study
  - Dennis Waehner
  - Watson Dupont
  - Judy Ford
  - Glenn and Geri
  - Brazzells
  - Bradleys
- Faxels
  - Dave Cook
  - Ross Looney
  - Catherine Spivey
  - James & Kim Kinzler
  - Coco Motley
  - Hillary McClelland
  - Sarah Frey
  - John & Laura Grady
  - Katie & Colleen Grady

**I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

Roy Phillips, Jennifer Carr

**I9: Individual**

NA

**I10: Individual**

NA

**D1: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D5: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D6: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D7: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D8: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D9: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D10: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D11: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D12: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D13: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

DRAFT

## ***D11: Additional Information***

### **C1: Committee - Deacons**

The group talked about the trends of declining membership.

Is there a gap in membership that we're missing?

Would be interested in hearing what the presbytery would answer these questions.

Would like the congregation to receive feedback on this process.

We need to look for answers about recent membership trends within WPC & outside WPC.

Consider reinstating a specific question about membership trends in future interviews.

Consider asking for responses from the groups that we have already interviewed.

### **C2: Committee - Outreach**

The book "The Apostles for Apollo" should be added to reference list.

Although membership trends were not discussed, the following could be a contributing factor to membership change: "In past year's, WPC had a running agreement with Clear Creek Community Church to do their weddings as CCC doesn't have a center aisle (WPC stopped doing outside weddings).".

### **C3: Committee - Communications**

We have a big and beautiful campus. What more could we do to draw people in? What can we do with this space to enable the call to Christ?

One idea is a focus on a particular group, i.e., special needs people. Fellowship Hall is a great place for overactive kids.

### **C4: Committee - Welcoming**

Look at area maps, draw proximity circles around the church and ask what functions / opportunities for the church lie within these areas. Focus on people close by geographically.

Comments always seem to focus on what we can't do or what we don't have. Whatever we do, we can't do it without a core group with passion. Costs should not stop us from trying to do things – outreach, mission, etc. – vicious circle.

Don't change service times so often, and reduce the number of "joint services" to minimize church worship time confusion. We are now up to 7 per year. If the service time is to change, be sure to announce it a multiple-multiple times – newsletters, website, pulpit, bulletins over 2-3 weeks. What if people work on Sundays?

Some people feel we need to fix things like Bouton Hall (where guests see the bad conditions) before we spend money on things like Outreach.

Why have we dropped Church on website/banners – just Webster Presbyterian?

Too much energy focused on making everything sound better by changing names and naming things – Greeters changed to Hosts and our early service is now named First Light. Instead we need to use our energy to make things better.

Narthex is getting too cluttered with stuff – looks bad. Groups need to put away signs, tables, etc. after use.

Some visitors ask “when are we getting a permanent pastor?” Don’t want to commit before that happens. Other visitors ask why we don’t just keep the two pastors we have.

**C5: Committee - Youth Ministry Team**

Unknown future for the denomination - membership declining

*[Δατα προωιδεδ το Περσοννελ Χομμιττεε ανδ ρεμωπεδ]*

We spend time trying to help children in the community. Most of them are Catholic and won't ever join our church.

**C6: Committee - Children's Ministry Team**

Sometimes things are planned without thinking how it effects families. Child care not always provided for events.

One service can cause confusion for families.

**C7: Committee - Membership Review Team**

NA

**G1: Group - New Beginnings Assessment Program**

There is a cost associated with the program - \$2800 for a Presbyterian Church.

The current session of this program in this area requires a decision by October 10, 2014. The WPC team agreed that the New Beginnings Assessment Program was something WPC should consider but not in the timeframe of this current session.

The current plan is to provide this information to the Session at the 9/23/14 meeting.

It was pointed out that the demographic information that is part of the Assessment Phase is already available to any church in the Presbytery.

**G2: Group - Small Group**

The original plan for Covenant groups (One Anothering) was to be together for about two years, then split, and add new members to the group. The groups have a size limit mostly because of where they meet. However, none of them want to split up. That might be something we may want to look at so that new people can go into an established group and not just have a group of all new people.

Maybe 2 or 3 of the Stephen Ministers could get together and lead some of the special interest groups we talked about - grief, divorce, etc. The new minister cannot be expected to do it all. Many people are reluctant to share anything personal with someone they don't really know. Even though the Stephen Ministers are trained, people don't feel as comfortable with them as with the ministers. This could help them get to know people who might open up to them better after participating in a special group.

We want to increase the diversity of the church and want to explore ways to do this better.

Good idea to be discussing membership. We cannot just expect a new minister to come in and immediately triple the number of members. We need a plan for what we'd like to see.

Do we really know who we are? We sometimes seem so worried about getting more people that we forget each other and our own goals. Maybe we need to look "inside" a little more.

People need to know that we are a "hub of the wheel" church. Our members come from all over the area -- not just Webster. We are broad-reaching -- Pasadena, Alvin, Pearland, Friendswood, Seabrook, League City, Nassau Bay, Dickinson, Clear Lake, Kemah...and maybe others.

### **G3: Group - Small Group**

Notice there is a lot for relationship-building for women in the church, but not so much for men.

### **S1: Staff - Helen Rose Moore**

The partnership with McWhirter is very good and very important. I applaud the new summer program -- we become friends with the children and build relationships from there.

WPC is at a crossroads, there is lots of opportunity here to continue to grow in faith. "Seek first the Kingdom and everything will be granted unto you." This may not be easy, but it is do-able.

There are a number of groups in the church with lots of energy. The group interested in Peru generated a lot of energy. There is a great deal of energy in the choir, the Praise Band and the Tuesday morning Bible Study. There is a lot of energy in the Deacons this year.

The Personnel Committee has a difficult and complex job, and they have been amazing and very supportive. We have a good staff, very competent and committed hard-working people.

The congregation faces hard questions regarding staff in the future. We face a very large debt and poor facilities (education wing, severe roof problems). The only place left to trim budget is staff. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

God doesn't care where we worship, but that we worship somewhere in spirit and truth.

### **S2: Staff - Helen DeLeon**

NA

### **S3: Staff - Linda Smith-Gregory**

Kids never have any free time anymore to just be kids - overscheduled. Hard to make time for church activities.

Programs like Upward Bound Sports would be wonderful to use. Too expensive?

One of the best things about our church - the children are very warm and welcoming, not biased. Visiting children want to come back.

Need to embrace technology. Kids today don't know a world without it. Needs to work at lightning speed. Need the visuals -- last thing we go to is written material -- least efficient method. Need to engage the kids by having them help teach the lesson. We don't have reliable, fast internet service all over the campus. Still have cable internet.

Prayer - if everyone would just pray - imagine what we could do. Ask God - show us what you want us to do. Listen for the answer. Our church would change for the better. All the petty disagreements would fade away.

The mess in the first classroom would make people not want to come back. Needs to be covered up until it is back to normal. Not inviting.

**S4: Staff - Jessie Kuehner**

Confirmation effects membership. Really important. This year it will be under Youth Ministry Team. *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

The kids have equal opportunities to participate in leadership activities. Jessie stated that she does not play favorites, and treats them all the same.

Youth need more leadership opportunities to make them feel warm, welcome, and loved. It also makes them feel like they are a part of the church. What they think matters.

**S5: Staff - Glenn and Geri Foster**

NA

**S6: Staff - Mary Marcotte (Presbytery Staff)**

Report Pending

**I1: Individual**

In *Trends and Actions* interviews another question (or an extension of the previous question) might be to ask – “Have you seen and read any books, articles, or documentaries that might add information or insight into this activity?”.

**I2: Individual**

NA

**I3: Individual**

Complete Response from I3 to provide the proper context for the above responses – all previous answers are extracted from the section below:

**Sampling/Methodology Issues**

- Large groups are unlikely to be honest.
  - Respondents may be afraid to discuss negative issues due to social pressure.
  - Large groups are great to allow interaction and expansion on positives and negatives uncovered.
  - One-on-one interviews are a must if we are to get at the truth, however
- Helen Rose (and other employees) should not be present.
  - It is inappropriate for the Pastor, Associate Pastor, and others to be present when we are conducting interviews.
  - Again, interviewees may feel constrained from being honest.
  - It is quite possible that some interviewees may feel that there are issues with the Pastor, Associate Pastor, or another employee.
- We are surveying the wrong group(s) and the wrong individuals.
  - Of course the people who are still at WPC have positive things to say.

- Survey current members of any Church and you will find the same thing.
- There is nothing we are going to come away with that is actionable from our questioning of these groups unless we ask them:
  - Have you thought about leaving WPC? Why/why not?
  - Do you know an individual or family that has left WPC? Why did they leave?
- Real need is to survey the following:
  - Individuals/families that have left the Church (members and non-members that attended regularly).
  - Individuals in the community that attend another Presbyterian Church in the area, but do not attend WPC.
  - Individuals (Christians) that don't attend any Church.

#### **Item/Question Issues**

- Clearly those that are still here like WPC.
- Again, let's ask them what would cause them to leave.
  - Generally, the reasons people frequent any business are many. The reasons that people stop frequenting a business are often fewer and share more commonality than the reasons people frequent a business.
  - In essence, the first thing we need to do is to stop doing things that are causing people to leave or never attend WPC. Almost all of these issues will be actionable. Some actions, however, may well be somewhat unpalatable.
- What about what other Churches do better?
  - Services?
  - Mission?
  - Facilities?
- Again, asking why people stay is one thing. We really, at this point, need to think about why people leave. We need to think about why people attend other Churches.
- Once we know what we are doing wrong, we can stop doing those things.
  - Making past and potential members aware of things we don't do may be as beneficial as continuing to do the things we do well.
- Obvious questions that are not being asked:
  - Why do you think we are losing members?
  - If we are so great, why are we not attracting new members?
  - What would make you (personally) leave?
  - Think about the last person/member you know personally who left the Church. Why do you think they left?
  - Why do Christians new to the area choose another Church? What are those Churches doing that we are not?

#### **Actionability Issues (Things to Think About)**

- Is our problem lack of exposure? Do people even know we are here?
- If people know we are here, why are they not choosing us?
- Tracking of membership issues
  - It is obvious that we don't do a great job of tracking who is/is not attending. This needs to change.
  - It is obvious we don't have a good way of recognizing when a member has left the Church. This also needs to change.
    - This is crucial as these are the people that absolutely need to be queried.
    - Why do they leave?
- Demographic Trends (Including Location Issues)
  - We can't change these...but we can react to them. We need, first, to gather information.
  - Target individuals who are:
    - Having their first child
    - Recently married
    - Recently moved to the area

- Broad advertising (other than direct contact) will be mostly useless and a waste of money.
- PCUSA Issues
  - Do we need to consider moving to ECO?
  - If not, do we need to address issues with Presbytery?
- Location
  - Do we need to consider moving the Church?

#### **General, Conclusions, Random Thoughts**

- We are asking the wrong questions.
  - We need to focus as much on the negative as the positive.
  - There may be more of an issue with why people leave than why people stay.
- We are asking questions to the wrong people or in the wrong situation/setting.
- I love going to Synod with the youth.
  - Synod is great because of the small groups.
  - Services are OK, but are not the primary draw.
  - Is it possible that we need to focus more on small group-like things (Sunday School, etc.)? Is it possible that Sunday services are one of the least important aspects of our Church?

#### **Additional Thoughts Provided Separately**

I don't think it was discussed. It just hit me that it was a methodological issue that might introduce bias while I was in the Deacon's meeting. Up until that time...it didn't click with me either....

For instance, remember when Pastor Mark had that idea (I guess it was his) about the Chapel where the playground is now. If people hated the idea, but Mark was in the room when the issue was discussed, those people might not have felt comfortable discussing their true feelings about the project. We need to guard against the yea-saying bias.

I think the same thing holds as group sizes get larger. It's great to do the interviews of the larger constituent groups. It allows respondents to bounce ideas around. On the other hand, we have to be careful that responses are not constrained due to a fear of hurting someone's feelings. We need brutal honesty.

It also occurs to me now that we need to think about whether it's appropriate for Session members to be present. Since the Session is ultimately responsible for things...does the presence of Session members constrain negative comments about how the Church is being managed? That's also something to think about.

What I got from the Deacon's meeting was that we are great and have a lot going for us. I don't disagree. But then, I'm still here. Of course I feel that way. The friendliness and family feel we have are, I think, not differentiating factors. Methodists, Baptists, everyone would say the same thing.

But...we are different. How? What do we sell? We have to find something that makes us totally unique...and stop doing things that run people off.

#### **I4: Individual**

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

#### **I5: Individual**

VBS

- Brought to light the deficiency when it comes to children's ministry.
- Nina had core group of 4-6 people who did the planning.

- The curriculum was chosen by the group.
- If someone worked the previous year, they got pulled into planning group the next year.
- *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*
- *[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*
- Learning about Jesus can be FUN!

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

*[Data provided to Personnel Committee and removed]*

**I6 & I7: Individual**

NA

**I8: Individual**

NA

**I9: Individual**

NA

**I10: Individual**

Service times - were supposed to be temporary, we were not given a choice - gone on for years. Keep in time frame - service is one hour - do not go over. Services need to start and end on time - you have that commitment with the people, looks like it lacks organization. Some days it might run a little longer because of special things, but cut something -- only one Minute for Mission, or only 3 verses on a song, or cut a song, or make creeds and prayers shorter, children's time needs to be shorter and to the point - it goes on too long. Really inconsiderate of the people attending when you disregard the times.

Go back to preaching from the pulpit. Many people hate the plastic podium. It is harder to see the minister - especially from the back half of the sanctuary. Also the sound is not as good as from the pulpit which is wired for sound - better than the other mics.

Young @ Heart is a wonderful program. The speakers and food are great as well as having a social time for the older people. The trips are great. We need more for the men to do. The parkers are really a help. We need more social things at church - like bridge group - or things to draw in families. We have Dinner Club 7, Solo Souls, but need things for young adults and families. More zone activities/communication. The zone gatherings this summer were a good idea - get to know people in a smaller setting. Have a group for young moms - bring in their babies in carriers - have Cokes and cookies, - talk about whatever they want - no structure, no charge, very informal, casual. They will bond and have a place and time to get out with their babies. We need fellowship for young adults - meet at the beer garden, have a movie/popcorn night at church with babysitting or go out to a movie and dinner, bowling night - things that promote fellowship, but are cheap and easy with babysitting.

Need programs to support new widows, or other people grieving. We just need to be aware of special needs of people in the church.

How about a resource book with names of people in the area that can provide special services - plumber, mechanic, painter, handy man, electrician, AC service, or members with special talents. Someone other people have used and know they can be trusted.

We need to update our member directory - want a printed copy. It will help the minister (and us!) learn names, and ours is very out of date.

**D1: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D2: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D3: Deacon Contact**

NA

**D4 – D14: Deacon Contact**

NA

DRAFT

## Appendix E: References - Additional Information

### ***G1: New Beginnings Assessment Program (reference provided separately)***

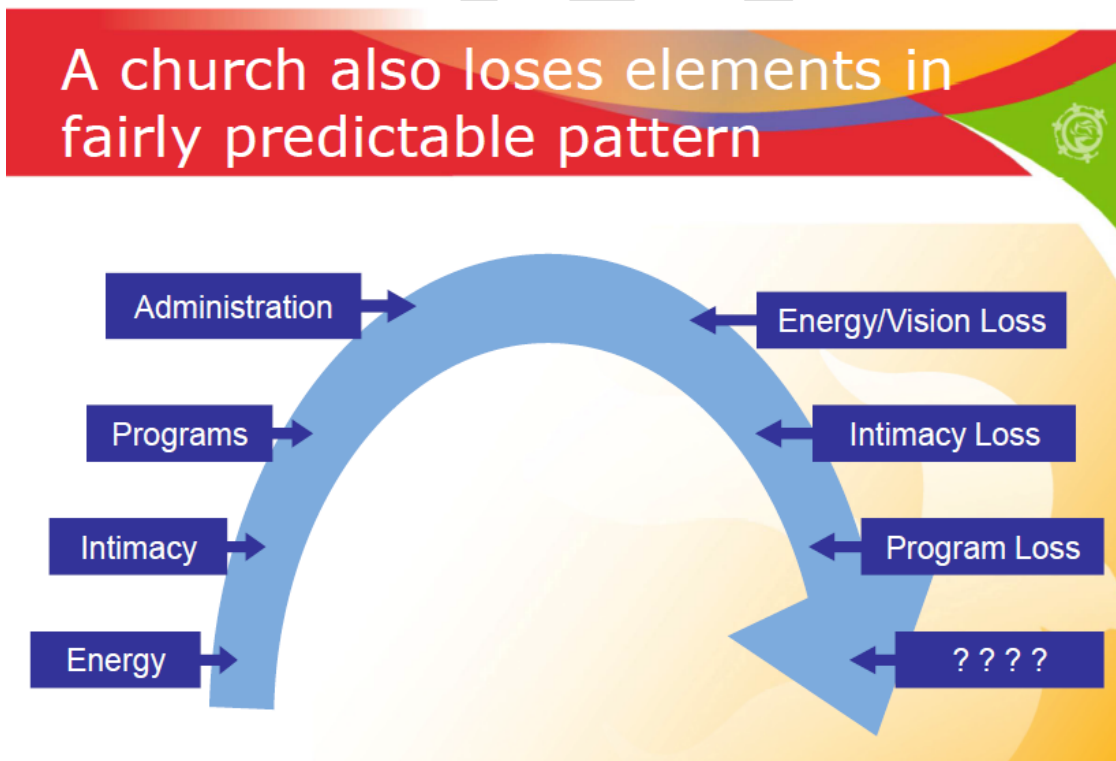
There is a cost associated with the program - \$2800 for a Presbyterian Church.

The current session of this program in this area required a decision by October 10, 2014. The WPC team agreed that the New Beginnings Assessment Program was something WPC should consider but not in the timeframe of this current session.

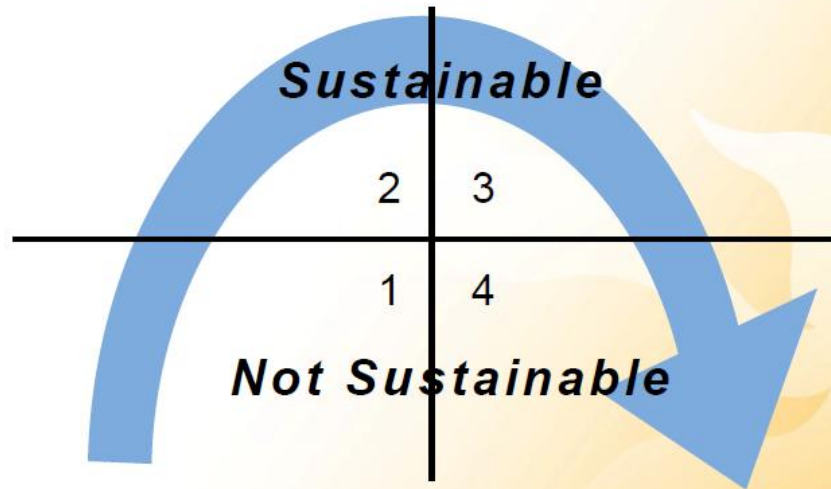
This information was provided to the 2014 Session.

It was pointed out that the demographic information that is part of the Assessment Phase is already available to any church in the Presbytery.

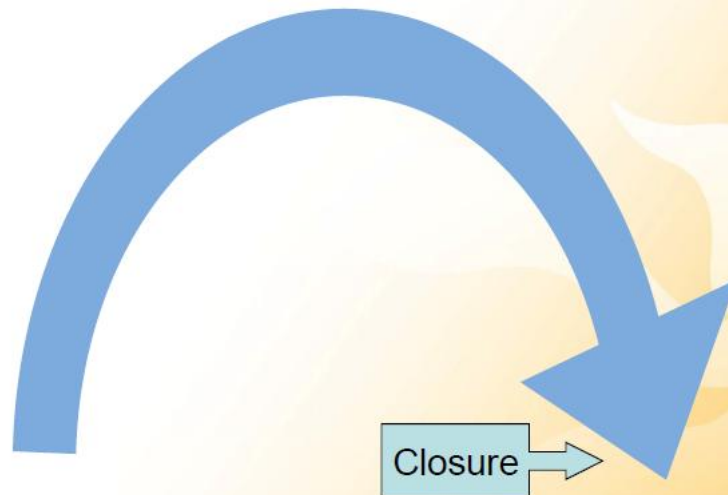
Some excerpts follow but the the full presentation is provided separately.



## Are we still sustainable?



Without an intervention, the avg. congregation lives 60-80 yrs



## ***R1: The Feminization of the Church (full article included)***

Why Its Music, Messages and Ministries Are Driving Men Away

By Holly Pivec

The leaders of a new, Christian movement think they've solved a centuries-old mystery: why men are absent from church. But their answer isn't politically correct.

They believe Christianity has become feminized.

There are generally more women than men in every type of church, in every part of the world, according to church growth experts like Patrick Johnstone, author of *Operation World*.

A traditional explanation is that women are more spiritual than men. But the leaders of this new movement suggest that the church's music, messages and ministries cater to women. One of the leaders is David Murrow, author of a provocative book *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nelson Books), who spoke with Biola Connections.

The result of this feminization is that many men, even Christian men, view churches as "ladies clubs" and don't go — or they often go to please their wives. Murrow's solution is to restore a masculine ethos. Many men's ministers, including some Biolans, agree.

But isn't the reverse true — that the church is controlled by men?

True, 93 percent of senior pastors in America are men, according to evangelical pollster George Barna. But, the majority of attendees in a typical church are women. Barna goes so far as to refer to women as "the backbone of the Christian congregations in America."

"[I]t's not too hard to discern the target audience of the modern church: a middle-aged to elderly woman," Murrow said in an interview with Faithreader.com.

The same claim was made by an earlier, more academic book, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Spence Publishing Company), by Leon J. Podles, a senior editor of *Touchstone Magazine*. But Murrow's book has had a bigger impact among evangelicals and has been featured by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

The book has resonated with many men — like Max West, from Payson, Ariz., who wrote in a review on Amazon.com: "[It] opened my eyes as to why I have had such a miserable church experience for the last 30 years."

Robert York, from Tigard, Ore., wrote: "It has ... helped me identify why I've been so frustrated with church so many times."

But Murrow said he addressed his book mainly to women, including married women who have been disappointed over their husbands' lack of involvement and to single women who have bemoaned the lack of single, churchgoing men. He said women — who have felt powerless getting men to attend church — actually have the most influence in the churches and, thus, the most power to reverse the feminization.

Even Murrow's critics — who accuse him of promoting a "hypermasculinity" — agree that Murrow has drawn attention to an alarming gender gap.

#### Mind the Gap

The gender gap began as early as the 13th century, according to some church historians. Others say it began during the Industrial Revolution. Nancy Pearcey, a visiting scholar at Biola, outlines this theory in her book *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity* (Crossway Books).

Pearcey said industrialization forced men to seek work away from home, in factories and offices, which created a split between the public and private spheres of life. The public sphere became secularized through the new values of competition and self-interest, and the private sphere came to represent the old values of nurturing and religion, Pearcey said. Thus, religion came to be seen as for women and children and not as relevant to the "real" world of business, politics and academia, she said.

Soon, in churches, women began to outnumber men, Pearcey said. So, male pastors began to adapt churches to their female demographic, she said.

But, interestingly, the gender gap is distinct to Christianity, according to Murrow and Podles. Other religions seem to have a gender balance or even more men than women — including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, they said.

Men's absence is especially noteworthy, they said, given that men were a strong force in the early church.

An exception to the gender gap may be found in some Muslim countries, like Morocco, where churches of Muslim converts are sometimes almost entirely men, according to Johnstone. But he estimates that, worldwide, the church is 66 percent women.

In America, among evangelical churches, 57 percent of members are women and, among mainline Protestant churches, 66 percent are women, according to a 1998 book *American Evangelicalism* (University of Chicago Press).

The imbalance is greatest in rural churches, small churches, older churches, traditionally black denominations, and in liberal churches, Murrow said, citing research from the 1998 National Congregations Study. It's smallest in non-denominational and Baptist churches, he said.

About 23 percent of married women attend without their husbands, according to Murrow.

The men who do attend show less commitment, including less participation in Sunday School, small groups and service activities, according to Barna. Men also report less practice of spiritual disciplines like tithing, Bible reading, evangelism and prayer.

#### Ladies Clubs

Gender differences explain why more women are drawn to church than men, according to Murrow and Podles. They believe these differences are revealed by the Bible, biology, anthropology, psychology and human experience.

Stereotypical gender differences have become so accepted that they are assumed in standardized psychological tests. The MMPI, for example, seeks to measure whether a person is more masculine or more feminine based on the person's interest in activities that are typically preferred by men or women.

To describe many women, Murrow lists traits like "relational," "nurturing" and "peace-making." He describes many men as "goal-driven," "competitive" and "adventurous." These differences show up in the types of movies many women and many men like: romantic vs. adventure films, Murrow said. In sum, women thrive when secure, and men thrive when challenged, he said.

But Dr. Gary Strauss, a professor in Biola's Rosemead School of Psychology, warns that Murrow may be promoting a "hypermasculinity" — the idea that all men should fit the stereotypical norm of a "man's man," like the Marlboro Man — tough, outdoorsy and self-reliant.

"He seems to place such a strong emphasis on the hypermasculine image that he doesn't adequately affirm men of a different type," Strauss said. "To me, from the hyperfeminine woman, on the one end of the human spectrum, to the hypermasculine man, on the other, and every person in between (assuming psychological health), reflects the breadth and image of God," he said.

Strauss added that a study by Sandra Bem, of Cornell University, indicates that men (or women) with a blend of both masculine and feminine traits may be more psychologically prepared to handle the range of challenges life presents than "hypermasculine" men (or "hyperfeminine" women).

Yet, because churches have more women, Murrow believes their stereotypical strengths are more valued — and are even seen as more godly. Masculine strengths are often seen as unneeded or as threats to the peaceful status quo, he said.

Johnstone believes the feminization of the church reflects a feminization of the larger culture.

"Our whole society has tended to deprive men of their biblical and creational strengths and empower women," Johnstone said.

As a result, many people think of church only as a nurturing place that addresses personal needs, Pearcey said. Think: sitting in circles, sharing feelings, holding hands, singing softly, comforting members.

### Love Songs and Feminine Spirituality

An example of the feminization of the church is its music. Typical praise songs refer to Jesus as a Christian's lover and praise his beauty and tenderness. Rarely do they praise his justice or strength, or refer to him as the head of an army leading his church into spiritual battle, like "Onward Christian Soldiers."

"There's definitely a trend toward a more intimate music style, like the music from the Vineyard," said Dr. Barry Liesch, a professor of music at Biola and author of *The New Worship* (Baker Books).

Feminized music concerns Steve Craig ('05), a graduate of Biola's degree completion program and the director of a men's ministry of over 400 men at Yorba Linda Friends Church in Yorba Linda, Calif.

"In our men's ministry, we're beginning to take out the flowery songs and replace them with the warrior-type lyrics and more masculine things that men identify with," Craig said.

Mike Erre (M.A. '04) — the director of a men's ministry of over 400 men at Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, Calif. — said feminine expressions of spirituality are more validated than masculine expressions.

"The classic example is the worship pose of the eyes shut and the arms raised in this tender embrace, singing a song that says, 'I'm desperate for you. You're the air I breathe.' Guys don't talk to guys like that," Erre said.

A feminized spirituality began in the 13th century, Podles said in his book *The Church Impotent*. One cause, he said, was women mystics who popularized "bridal imagery," the metaphor of an individual Christian as the bride of Christ. (The biblical metaphor is of the corporate church as the bride of Christ, not the individual person.) They also used erotic imagery to describe their soul's relationship with Christ. This feminization explains the abrupt departure of men from the church beginning in the 13th century, according to Podles.

Today the bridal imagery continues. Many books, for example, have titles like *Falling in Love With Jesus: Abandoning Yourself to the Greatest Romance of Your Life* (Nelson Impact), released, ironically, by the publisher of Murrow's book. This may be because Christian publishers know women are the main consumers of Christian books. Seventy percent of customers in Christian retail stores are women, according to Bill Anderson, the president and CEO of the Christian Booksellers Association and a member of Biola's School of Business Advisory Board.

Even some men's ministries have encouraged feminine expressions of spirituality, like *Promise Keepers*, whose advertisements in the 1990s showed men singing, holding hands, hugging and crying, Murrow said. But *Promise Keepers* is now using more masculine tactics. The advertisements for their 2006 conference, titled "Unleashed," depict flashes of lightning and say: "It is not about learning how to be a nicer guy. It's about becoming the powerful man God designed you to be." Whether their new approach works remains to be seen.

### Men's Ministry — A Church's Lowest Priority

Another example of feminization is a lack of ministries for men. Women have Bible studies, prayer groups, support groups, teas, and retreats and, of course, children have a plethora of programs. But some churches offer only an annual retreat for men. Yet, this is the opposite of the way Jesus did ministry, according to Murrow. He said Jesus focused on men, knowing that women and children would follow.

According to an oft-quoted statistic from Promise Keepers, when a mother comes to faith in Christ, her family follows 34 percent of the time, but when a father comes to faith his family follows 93 percent of the time.

"It's very seldom you have a man in church whose wife is staying home," said Dr. Erik Thoennes, a theology professor at Biola and the teaching elder at Grace Evangelical Free Church in La Mirada, Calif.

So, what will it take to get men into church?

They need to see the greater purpose — their role in the advancing the kingdom of God, according to Erre.

"The gospel that Jesus and Paul preached is revolutionary, and it's worth giving your life to," Erre said. "But part of the reason guys aren't involved is that we've sold them a milquetoast gospel. We don't paint it as big enough — or God as awesome enough — to be compelling," he said.

Instead, the church often leaves the impression that, once people get saved, their role is to bide time until they go to heaven, Erre said.

"If men think they're going to church to check off a box, that leaves them totally uninspired," said Danny Wallen ('88, M.Div. '93), a director for Every Man Ministries in Trabuco Canyon, Calif. Wallen was raised in a Christian home, but said he was bored by church into his adult years. Looking back, he realizes he didn't see purpose.

Also, many church service opportunities are geared for women — like working in the nursery, teaching children, cooking and hospitality. So, many men feel their options are limited to ushering, directing parking, or sitting on a committee — activities that might not allow them to use their skills or challenge them.

When men can't contribute, they feel worthless, according to Gentry Gardner ('83), the founder of Sure Passage, a men's ministry in Colorado Springs, Colo.

"Once they feel discouraged, they pull back and disconnect," he said.

Even professionals who join church committees, like a building or finance committee, often complain that the skills they contribute to the corporate world — like taking risks, making hard decisions, and thinking outside the box — aren't welcome in many churches, whose governing boards tend to play it

safe, according to Murrow. As a result, less gets accomplished, which can be frustrating to men who are results-driven, he said.

For example, some businessmen might suggest that a church cut an ineffective program that is costing time and money and replace it with a more effective one. But inefficient programs often remain because a more feminine value — of not hurting people’s feelings — wins out.

The reason younger churches typically have more men than older churches may be because more of men’s gifts — like vision casting and risk taking — are needed until a church becomes settled.

One way Murrow’s church involves men is through an automotive ministry that takes donated vehicles, fixes them, and gives them to single mothers and the working poor. A side benefit is that men develop friendships with other men in the context of doing things together, which is more natural for them than sitting in a circle talking — the typical church format, according to Murrow.

Social justice ministries — that allow men to use their skills to help the weak and provide interaction with business and politics — are especially appealing to men, Podles said.

Craig said mission trips are exciting for many men in his church because they offer challenge, adventure and specific goals: “like construction projects, where they can get their hands dirty and see a finished project in the end,” he said.

#### Touchy-Feely Sermons

Another turn-off for men is touchy-feely sermons. Pearcey said the modern church stresses emotions and inner spiritual experiences while neglecting the intellectual side of the faith.

“The more traditionally masculine side of Christianity enjoys crossing swords with hostile secular worldviews. So, as long as Christianity appeals to the emotional, therapeutic, interpersonal, relational areas, it’s not going to appeal to men as much as to women,” Pearcey said.

Churches should engage men’s intellects to help them see the relevance of Christianity to the “real” world of politics, industry and business, Pearcey said.

“We have to recover the notion that Christianity is true on all levels, not just for your emotional life or repairing relationships, as important as those things are,” she said.

Many churches emphasize Jesus’ softer teachings, like his love and his desire to save, and they ignore the doctrines of sin and hell, according to Podles. But men dislike liberal Christianity — “a mild religion of progress and enlightenment” as opposed to a battle between good and evil, Podles said.

Men want to expend their lives for a great cause, even if it involves risk, according to Murrow. He said that’s why the U.S. military’s “Army of One” campaign was effective. But American churches rarely teach about Christian suffering and martyrdom, Murrow said. Instead, today’s Christianity is presented as an antidote to these things, he said.

“Men are more attracted to religion if it presented as a quest, an adventure, a heroic exploit,” Pearcey said. “They want something challenging, bracing, demanding.”

To reach men, churches should stress the cost and dangers of following Christ — including Christians’ conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil, according to Podles.

Yet, men should be reminded that the sacrifice won’t always be a “huge, glorious display like William Wallace stepping out on a battlefield,” Erre said. Many times it will be staying in a troubled marriage, raising a handicapped child, or working a hated job to provide for a family, he said.

#### Girly-Men Pastors

Touchy-feely sermons come from touchy-feely pastors. A feminized church tends to attract more “gentle, sensitive, nurturing” leadership,” according to Pearcey.

“If religion is defined primarily in terms of emotional experience and is therapeutic, then who is it going to attract as ministers?” she said.

Pearcey said to consider a typical youth pastor.

“He’s really into relationships, very motivating, but is he teaching good apologetics? Is he teaching youth to use their minds and to understand deeper theological truths? At least the ones I’ve known haven’t,” she said. “Today, the common trajectory is for youth pastors to become senior pastors,” she added.

Murrow argues that the church needs strong, masculine leadership because men follow men. He said Jesus’ disciples are a prime example of this principle.

“Bold leadership attracts men. But even more attractive than a dynamic pastor is the sight of men in the pews who are true followers of Jesus Christ,” Murrow said in his book.

Morrow anticipates concern from some women that he is promoting unilateral male leadership. He said he is not seeking male dominance, but male resurgence.

Thoennes is also concerned about a lack of strong, male leadership in the church. But he said, if the church has become feminized, then he doesn’t see that as the fault of women or the church — but of men — who, he believes, have abdicated the involvement they should have.

“If the church doesn’t have enough strong male influence, that’s not a reason for men to stop going, but a great reason for them to go,” he said.

To help male Biola students become leaders, Student Ministries plans to launch a chapter of Men’s Fraternity next fall, led by Jonathan Morrow, a seminary student at Biola.

Yet, much of the church is seeking further feminization, through attempts to increase female clergy and to create gender-neutral Bibles and hymns. Many liberal seminaries now graduate equal numbers of women and men, or more women than men, like Yale Divinity School and Harvard Divinity School.

(Currently, Biola's seminary, Talbot School of Theology, is about 76 percent men.)

Johnstone believes the feminist movement in mainline churches has contributed to the decline in male membership.

#### Restoring Balance

Murrow said churches that seek to reverse this feminization might face opposition, as the leaders in his church first did.

But he and other leaders in the men's movement, like Gardner, believe a masculine spirit will bring men, and gender balance, to the church.

"Once you start attracting a man's full heart, soul, mind and strength — and he sees that there are ways he can use all those in the church — then we're going to start seeing a turnaround of the absent man," Gardner said

DRAFT

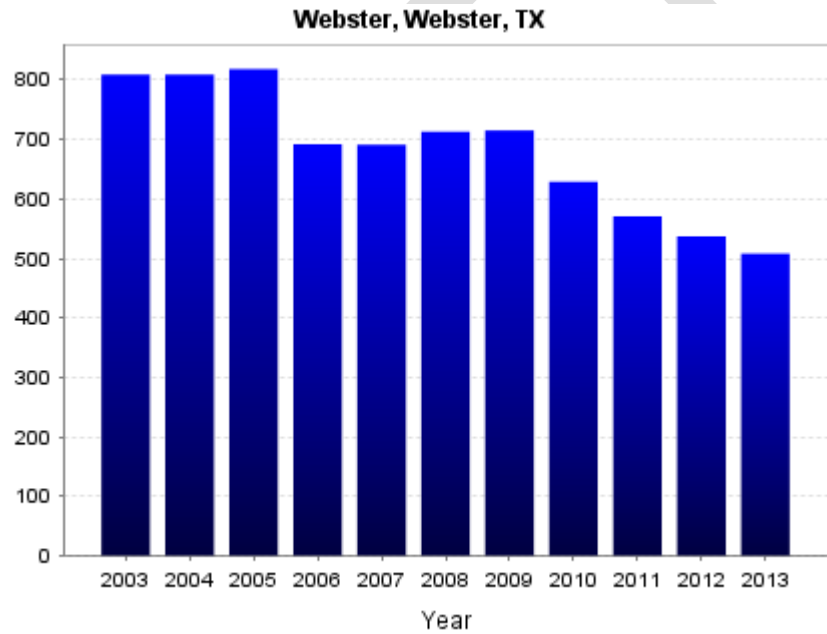
***R2: 10 Year Trends - WPC (reference provided separately)***

Last ten years of Total Membership, Total Gains and Losses, Worship Attendance, Christian Education Enrollment, Total Contributions, and Contributions per Person for Webster Presbyterian Church.

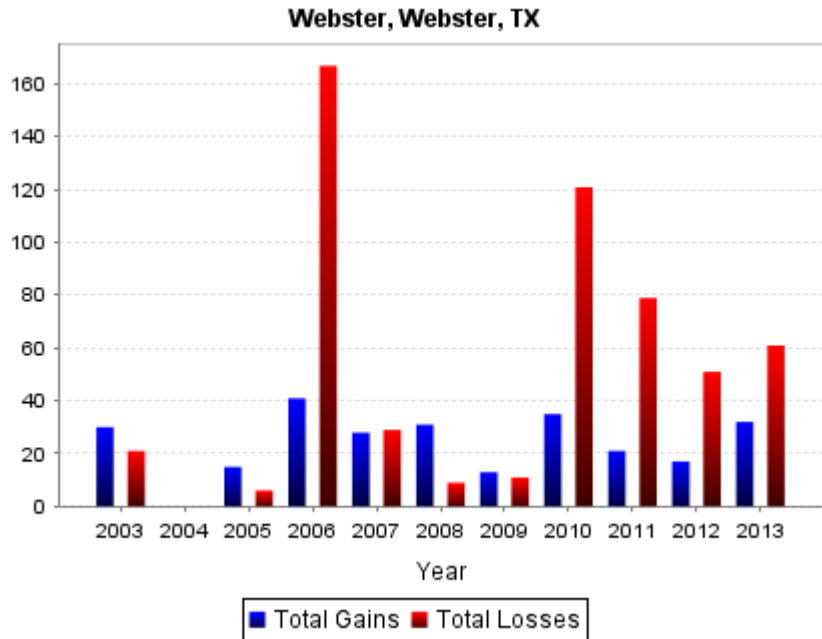
Major highlights provided below.

<http://apps.pcusa.org/tenyeartrends/report/8778/>

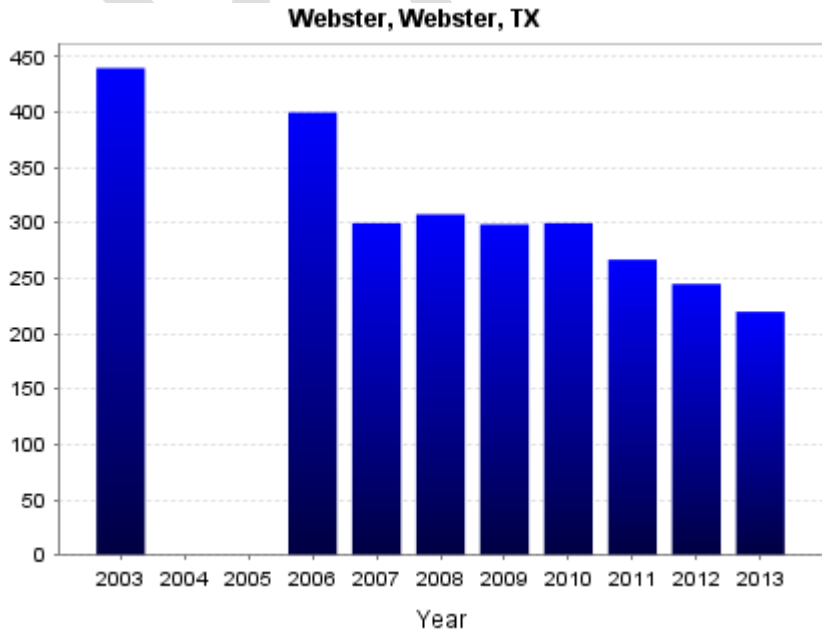
## Total Membership



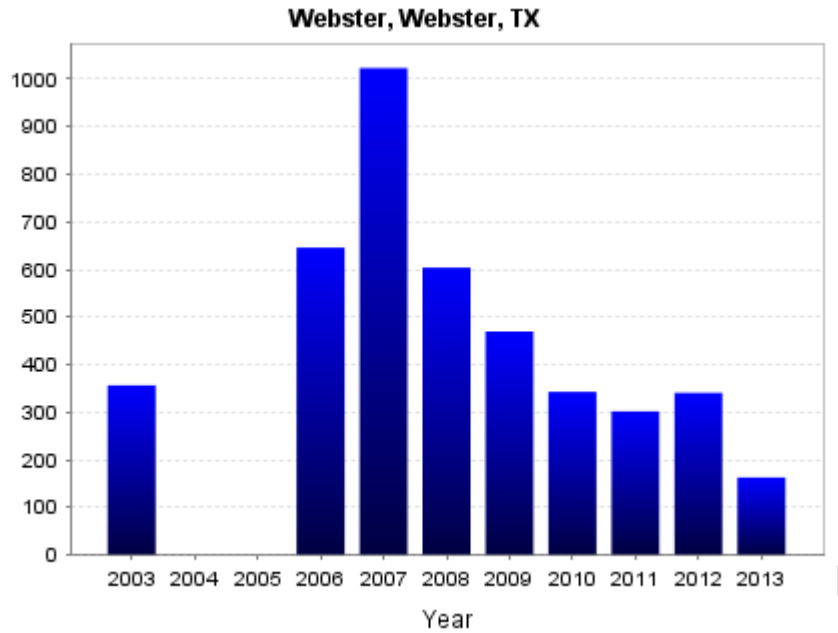
## Total Gains and Losses



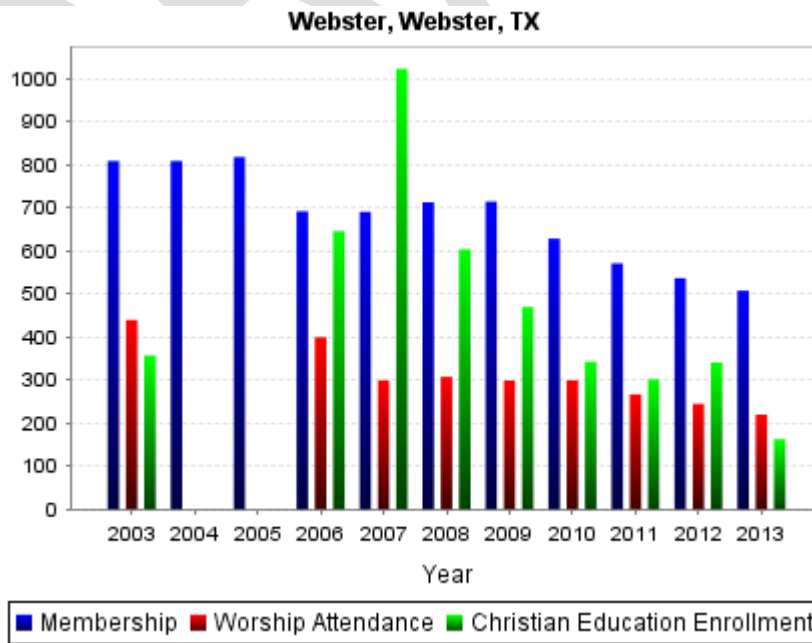
## Worship Attendance



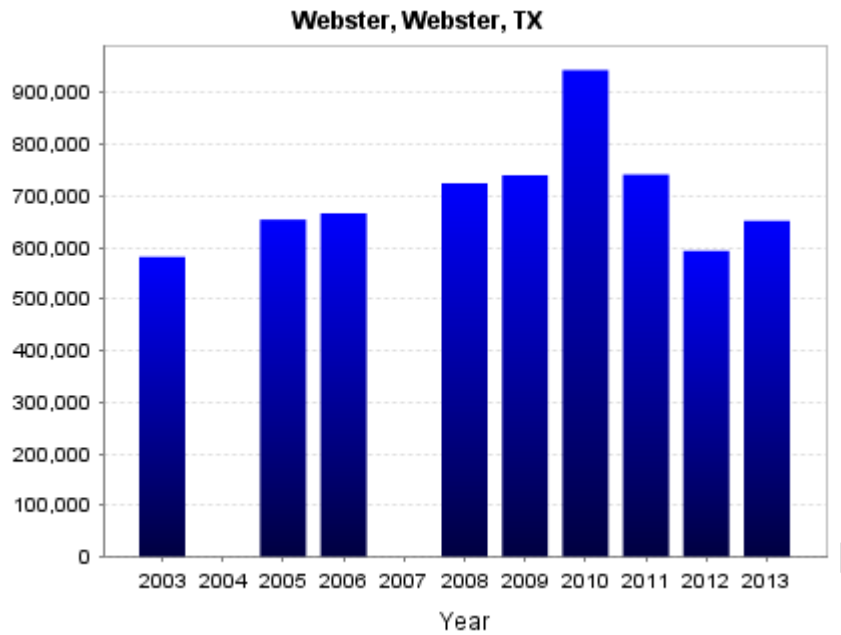
# Christian Education Enrollment



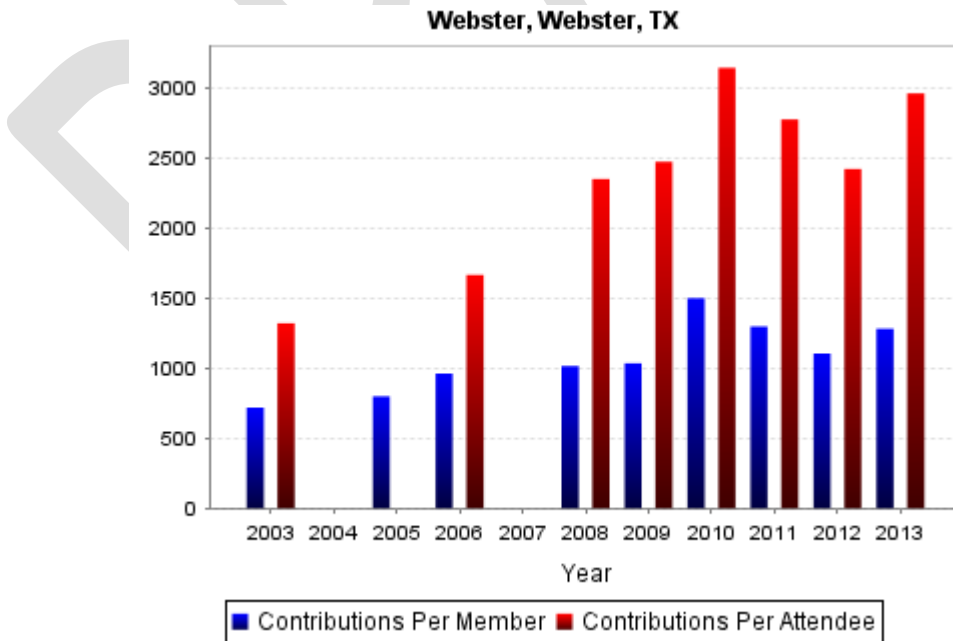
# Membership, Worship Attendance and Christian Education Enrollment



# Total Contributions



# Contributions per Person



### ***R3: This Land of Strangers (full book - not provided)***

*Excerpts from the reference related to Question 3A:*

#### Religion and Belief: Growth Trends Undermine Relationships

The trend continues: spouses leaving marriage, customers and employees leaving organizations, citizens leaving political parties, and believers leaving religious affiliation in the United States. According to ABC News, the percentage of Americans who say they have no affiliation (15 percent) has almost doubled in the past 18 years, and the percentage who defined themselves as Christian has dropped from 86 percent in 1990 to 76 percent in 2008. This trend is counter to the overall rise in the number of religious believers around the world presented earlier. It seems to reflect an America that is following in the footsteps of an older, more staid Western European religious culture more than the vibrant and frothy religious cultures of Africa, the Middle East, or Latin America.

Defections from Christianity, the largest domestic religious group, have risen 18 percentage points in 18 years. "Unaffiliated" is now in third place, just behind Catholics (25 percent) and Baptists (16 percent) and exceeding mainline Methodists, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Episcopalians combined. The percentage of American adults who identify themselves as Protestants dropped below 50 percent around the year 2005. Mainline denomination have been losing membership for decades in the United States, as have Jewish communities (those self-identified as religious—not by ethnicity)—dropped from 3.1 million to 2.6 million from 1990 to 2008.

In spite of the overall decline in affiliation, conservative Pentecostals/charismatics have increased from 5.6 million in 1990 to nearly 8.0 million in 2008. Mormons/Latter Day Saints also have increased, from 2.4 million to 3.1 million for the same period. Nondenominational Christians, including members of Bible churches (independent churches that place a heavy emphasis on biblical teaching) and megachurches, recruiting from denominations, have grown from 194,000 in 1990 to more than 8 million in 2008. Once again, Americans have aggressively joined groups defined by what they are not: not religiously affiliated, not Christian, or not with a mainline denomination. Or, they have joined more conservative, narrow, outspoken groups.

A second factor closely related to fleeing religious affiliation is a rise in the rate of changing affiliations. Pew reports that roughly half of the U.S. adult population has changed religion at some point in their lives, compared to only 15 percent in 1955. This upswing in religious divorce and remarriage is yet another place in our lives where relational volatility reigns.

A third factor to look at is church attendance. According to a Newsweek poll, those reporting they attend church weekly remains unchanged over the past 40 years (45 percent), yet independent research

reports the number of people actually showing up at a typical Protestant church service has dropped by 13 percent, even though the population of America has increased by 9 percent! Catholic Church attendance has declined from around 44 percent in 1987 to 33 percent in 2005.

The underlying causes of the decline in organized religion vary by group. For example, two-thirds of former Catholics and half of former Protestants say they left their childhood faith because they no longer believe in God or the teachings of most religions; as discussed, many cite reasons of hypocrisy, judgmental attitudes, and leaders too focused on money and power. Much as in politics, people have lost the faith and given up their relational ties.

As in business and politics, scandal in religion has had an eroding impact on confidence: “From 1973 to the mid-1980s, religious institutions obtained many ratings above 60 percent. Ratings suffered in 1989 due to the televangelist scandals involving embezzlement and sexual improprieties by the likes of Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker ... by 2002, it had sunk to 45 percent.” This represents a 40-year low. The sexual-abuse issues among leaders of the Catholic Church have had an impact. According to Harvard's National Leadership Index, religious leaders rated the lowest in 2009 since the index began, in 2005, ranking just ahead of business: eighth out of 13 sectors.

These findings tell us that when it comes to the eroding relationships with its constituents, religion is often its own worst enemy. While it is tempting to blame the media, Hollywood, and a host of others for the challenges, it suffers most from self-inflicted wounds. As confidence in institutional religion has declined, a number of churches have followed the corporate practice of attempting to rebrand, including dropping their denominational name, to unload unattractive relational baggage.

*Excerpts from the reference related to Question 3C:*

#### The Age of Relationship: Revaluing and Reclaiming Relationships

What will it take to reclaim relationships? There are some societal challenges that only stronger relationships can successfully address—at home in our personal lives and in the organizations where we work, govern, and worship. Reclaiming relationships will require a new set of priorities and leadership that moves us forward. The good news is that there is hopeful and compelling evidence that a number of these changes are surfacing in this, a new forthcoming age—the Age of Relationship. In these final chapters, we will discuss three key priorities for reclaiming relationships: (1) revaluing relationships, (2) reclaiming small and local, and (3) embracing relational leadership. Along the way, we will report on some of the encouraging evidence that these priorities are reemerging across our society.

#### *Revaluing Relationships*

Finding our way to more valued relationships does not start with others—relatives and friends or leaders of businesses, government, churches. It starts with each of us. We can't single-handedly change the world, but if we strengthen our relationships, the world will change.

Our network of key relationships is—and must be—much broader than just friends and those we feel comfortable with. ... Respecting others, including those with whom we have differences, is a crucial component of relationships. Critics can be particularly hard for us to stomach and can drain us of our energy, but they can also help us adjust, grow, and deal with issues that are central to our development. The ability to accept that even our worst critics and enemies have valuable information that we can use is a precious gift.

If we are serious about further developing human capital, it will require the development of enhanced relational capacity. I use the term relational capacity to define the potential of relationships, working in concert, to be highly productive. For families, it means environments that create functional households, strong parental support for productive children, stable workers, recovery from adverse conditions such as illness, payment of taxes, support of other family members as needed, or volunteer efforts to support those in need. For organizations, this productivity can mean manufactured products, new customers, new markets, or better social services.

The very concept of a family, business, or nonprofit organization assumes that some level of synergy exists. Whether that synergy existed to reproduce, to band together to avoid predators, to hunt, or to build, it is basic to relational economies of scale that a committed, competent, accountable group can do certain things quicker, cheaper, more reliably, more often, or with higher quality.

Relational capacity requires the commitment and competence of stakeholders to build strong, functional, lasting relationships that then bear fruit. Relationship capacity is all about attracting, motivating, developing, and then retaining these targeted relationships. Attraction requires some level of affinity, causing relationships to initially form. Motivation involves building commitment and energy. Development involves advancement through learning, feedback, and accountability to increasingly produce over time. Retaining relationships requires a level of cohesion and glue that helps the relationship stay together even in difficult circumstances.

The energy and excitement that relationship capacity creates are very apparent; ... Organizations and families operating with an ample supply of relational capacity are much better equipped to deal with relational or related challenges because they have reserves to draw on. Conversely, those operating on empty cannot withstand adversity because they are vulnerable, and a little adversity can put them under.

Think of the personal and organizational relationships in your own network: Where is there ample relationship capacity and where are you running on empty? The relational models deployed by organizations in biblical times, such as the use of slave labor that built the pyramids, were driven by a one-sided power-exercising force. Likewise, family relationships historically have placed a premium on control and compliance, most often with the male in the role of authority. More recently, we have moved from the power of force and oppression to one of freedom and reciprocal relationships.

The list below is an instructive reminder of how relational capacity helps us make this shift and contributes to personal and organizational productivity.

- Relational capacity generates energy. Increasing relational capacity increases energy. Some of the people and organizations we interact with add to our energy while others drain us. Those adept at building and sustaining strong relational capacity by valuing and obtaining value from others build the energy supply to get important and difficult things done. Leader arrogance toward those in lesser roles chews up large chunks of relational capacity.

- Relational capacity translates conflict and diversity into influence and innovation. Poorly managed or suppressed conflict drains relational capacity, while differences handled effectively can be sources of influence, innovation, and risk taking.

- Relational capacity enables learning and development. Strong relationship cultures are very intentional about promoting learning, while organizations that focus on short-term productivity to the exclusion of learning atrophy.

- Relational capacity requires accountability. Accountability is the way individuals and organizations correct past mistakes and avoid future mistakes. Building relational capacity means making relationships a top priority.”

### *Reclaiming Small and Local*

The spirit of small and local is an invisible, relational force that breathes life, animation, and energy within and among us. Small and local is a structure that nurtures relational capacity in the same way the home team feeds off the energy of the crowd. It is a marked contrast to loneliness, which, as discussed earlier, signals starvation and danger.

Small and local is the infrastructure of relationships, where rebuilding takes place. The spirit of small and local is making a comeback, not unlike the parable of the prodigal son. It does not mean returning to a simpler past, shunning advancements that have improved our lives, or even eschewing large organizations. Rather, it means discovering how to reclaim local community in a relationally challenged era.

Many megachurches today have found a way to become more local. They have adapted cell groups, small groups of eight to 12 parishioners that meet in their homes several times a month—often sharing a meal, fellowship, personal challenges, and study—to build relationships at the local level. As one person put it, “Ours is not an impersonal thousand-person congregation; it is really one hundred congregations of ten friends each who meet, break bread, study, and discuss topics, then share their joys and concerns.”

Likewise, Barna estimates that the house church movement—small home-based churches where people meet in one another's homes and conduct their own programs and study—has grown from 8.8 million to 11.5 million since 2008. “They are turning to small, regular weekly gatherings where they pray, worship, study Scripture and support each other's spiritual lives without all the trappings of a building, a budget, an outside authority or, often, even a pastor ... they ‘do church,’ rather than ‘go to church.’” It is a very relationship-centric, local model.

“Love your neighbor” is about embracing your local community. It is what successful churches do well. It is interesting that when local relationships form and develop around helping those in need, the power of the relationships grows much stronger. Neighbors helping neighbors: There could not be a more basic message about organic growth and development for churches. Dealing with the uncommitted and relationally empty makes us tired, whether it's neighborhoods or churches full of strangers. Our need for relationships is driving us toward small and local. It is nothing less than a strong gravitational pull to come home.

### *Embracing Relational Leadership*

Relational Leadership is leadership that builds relational capacity. It cultivates, releases, and levers the inherent productive potential of a family, team, group, or organization in producing purposeful outcomes. Over time it reinforces and reproduces itself by contributing to a relational culture. Leadership is a complex subject; much has been written about participative and related styles of management. Yet often what has been missing is the full relational, cultural context that now makes this shift so necessary. Here, we'll focus on three key components of leadership that are inherently relationship oriented and central to building relational capacity – Relationship Purpose, Servant Leadership, and Leading that Invites and Engages.

*Relationship Purpose:* Seeking higher purpose in small things and large is where relational leadership begins. The single most important relational act of a leader is translating a worthy purpose into meaning that invites and inspires shared effort and productive outcomes. ... Relational leaders constantly battle to shift the attention from narrow, inward-looking, selfish interest to make purpose the prevailing shared thought of the organization. Purpose serves as the lubricant for reconciling disagreements, the energy source to overcome fatigue, the glue for splintered groups, and the point of focus for the bored and distracted. It does not make everyone agree, be best friends, or even like each other; rather, it elevates the mission so group members do not allow differences to subvert it.

*Servant Leadership:* The litmus test for followers to gauge their leaders' devotion to purpose is this: How do they serve, and what are they willing to give up? Relational leaders know that talk is cheap and thus they repeatedly find opportunities to serve and give sacrificially

*Leading that Invites and Engages:* Relational leaders continually invite and engage stakeholders to be fully and mutually present and committed. They continually ask others their opinion, listen to and consider suggestions, provide forums for open discussion, seek feedback, and pursue more participative decision making. All of these aspects of the process sustain engaged stakeholders around purpose.

How is each of us doing on the “invite and engage stakeholders” test—at home or in organizations? We live in a world desperate for relational capacity that helps stakeholders bring their highest and best. Are we enlisting those who seem invisible, different, or difficult to be with?

*Engaged Leadership: Four Keys:* It is easy to be in favor of engaged leadership, but relational leaders encounter some especially trying challenges. I have identified four key issues that are uniquely difficult and valuable in engaging stakeholders.

1. *Engage failure constructively.* Failure is a painful fact of life, but it is also our greatest teacher and best source for innovation. The big temptation is to ignore it or its source. Relational leaders engage failure, which is not the same as condoning it. Engaging failure means confronting it, openly discussing it, understanding it, and acting on it. The greatest opportunities and the greatest risks for relational leaders occur around their own or others' failures. While failure can be risky, a culture too fearful to innovate and learn exchanges the risk of failure for the certainty of stagnation and death.

2. *Foster bottom-up innovation and change.* Relational leaders invite informal leadership and bottom-up innovation and change. Think of the many wonderful benefits in our lives that started at the grassroots level: the Reformation in the 16th century, American independence, the Apple computer. It is interesting that viral marketing—a bottom-up phenomenon—has become the “it girl” of marketing. It is a way to unleash viral forces at the most local of levels to accomplish what top-down force or incentives have proven unable to do.

3. *Productively engage doubt.* Is there anything more relevant to understand than the doubts of the faithful? Productive engagement of doubt activates the early warning system for failure and is the first step in warding off victims and reclaiming purpose. Relational leaders protect a space for the doubting and dissenting to ensure that inconvenient truths come out and questioning stakeholders stay engaged. Relational leaders go to great lengths to keep doubters in the conversation, in the game, and accountable.

4. *Secure peer commitment and accountability.* Much of our leadership lore revolves around subordinates committing to their leaders. Followers often express commitment to leaders and their causes, but compliance, not commitment, rules much of the time. Fear of reprisal can produce counterfeit commitment. Like rebar in concrete—commitment helps hold everything together.

## ***R4: Why Men Hate Going to Church (full book - not provided)***

**“Church is boring.”**

**“It’s irrelevant.”**

**“It’s full of hypocrites.”**

You’ve heard the excuses —now learn the real reasons men and boys are fleeing churches of every kind, all over the world.

Christianity is the only world religion with a chronic shortage of men. David Murrow identifies the barriers to male participation, and explains why it’s so hard to motivate the men who do go to church. Then, he takes you inside several fast-growing congregations that are winning the hearts of men and boys.

The first release of *Why Men Hate Going to Church* sold more than 125,000 copies and was published in multiple languages. This edition is completely revised, reorganized, and rewritten, with more than 70 percent new content. *Why Men Hate Going to Church* does not call men back to church—it calls the church back to men.

“This is one of the most helpful books for understanding why men are indifferent toward church and how churches must change to welcome men.”

—MARK DRISCOLL, pastor of Mars Hill Church; cofounder of Acts 29 Church Planting; founder of The Resurgence

“[This] is a prophetic and relevant ‘snap-out-of-it’ masterwork that every pastor must read—not just for the sake of the kingdom, but also for his own sake and sanity in ministry.”

—KENNY LUCK, men’s pastor, Saddleback Church

“David Murrow knows how to connect with men. Where was this guy when I was twenty?”

—FRANK PASTORE, host of America’s largest Christian talk show, KKLA (Los Angeles)

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE AVAILABLE FOR FREE AT

[WWW.CHURCHFORMEN.COM/GUIDES](http://WWW.CHURCHFORMEN.COM/GUIDES)

<http://www.amazon.com/Why-Men-Hate-Going-Church/dp/078523215X>

One aspect of this book is that the author explores the things that the mega-churches are doing right (and sometimes wrong) to attract and maintain men as members.

## ***R5: Why Millennials are leaving the Church (full article provided)***

But I would encourage church leaders eager to win millennials back to sit down and really talk with them about what they're looking for and what they would like to contribute to a faith community.

*Rachel Held Evans is the author of "Evolving in Monkey Town" and "A Year of Biblical Womanhood." She blogs at [rachelheldevans.com](http://rachelheldevans.com). The views expressed in this column belong to Rachel Held Evans*

Opinion by **Rachel Held Evans**, Special to CNN

**(CNN)** – At 32, I barely qualify as a millennial.

I wrote my first essay with a pen and paper, but by the time I graduated from college, I owned a cell phone and used Google as a verb.

I still remember the home phone numbers of my old high school friends, but don't ask me to recite my husband's without checking my contacts first.

I own mix tapes that include selections from Nirvana and Pearl Jam, but I've never planned a trip without Travelocity.

Despite having one foot in Generation X, I tend to identify most strongly with the attitudes and the ethos of the millennial generation, and because of this, I'm often asked to speak to my fellow evangelical leaders about why millennials are leaving the church.

Armed with the [latest surveys](#), along with personal testimonies from friends and readers, I explain how young adults perceive evangelical Christianity to be too political, too exclusive, old-fashioned, unconcerned with social justice and hostile to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

I point to research that shows young evangelicals often feel they have to choose between their intellectual integrity and their faith, between science and Christianity, between compassion and holiness.

I talk about how the evangelical obsession with sex can make Christian living seem like little more than sticking to a list of rules, and how millennials long for faith communities in which they are safe asking tough questions and wrestling with doubt.

Invariably, after I've finished my presentation and opened the floor to questions, a pastor raises his hand and says, "So what you're saying is we need hipper worship bands. ..."

And I proceed to bang my head against the podium.

Time and again, the assumption among Christian leaders, and evangelical leaders in particular, is that the key to drawing twenty-somethings back to church is simply to make a few style updates – edgier music, more casual services, a coffee shop in the fellowship hall, a pastor who wears skinny jeans, an updated Web site that includes online giving.

But here's the thing: Having been advertised to our whole lives, we millennials have highly sensitive BS meters, and we're not easily impressed with consumerism or performances.

In fact, I would argue that church-as-performance is just one more thing driving us away from the church, and evangelicalism in particular.

Many of us, myself included, are finding ourselves [increasingly drawn to high church traditions](#) – Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, the Episcopal Church, etc. – precisely because the ancient forms of liturgy seem so unpretentious, so unconcerned with being “cool,” and we find that refreshingly authentic.

What millennials really want from the church is not a change in style but a change in substance.

We want an end to the culture wars. We want a truce between science and faith. We want to be known for what we stand for, not what we are against.

We want to ask questions that don't have predetermined answers.

We want churches that emphasize an allegiance to the kingdom of God over an allegiance to a single political party or a single nation.

We want our LGBT friends to feel truly welcome in our faith communities.

We want to be challenged to live lives of holiness, not only when it comes to sex, but also when it comes to living simply, caring for the poor and oppressed, pursuing reconciliation, engaging in creation care and becoming peacemakers.

You can't hand us a latte and then go about business as usual and expect us to stick around. We're not leaving the church because we don't find the cool factor there; we're leaving the church because we don't find Jesus there.

Like every generation before ours and every generation after, deep down, we long for Jesus.

Now these trends are obviously true not only for millennials but also for many folks from other generations. Whenever I write about this topic, I hear from forty-somethings and grandmothers,

Generation Xers and retirees, who send me messages in all caps that read “ME TOO!” So I don’t want to portray the divide as wider than it is.

But I would encourage church leaders eager to win millennials back to sit down and really talk with them about what they’re looking for and what they would like to contribute to a faith community.

Their answers might surprise you.

*Rachel Held Evans is the author of "Evolving in Monkey Town" and "A Year of Biblical Womanhood." She blogs at [rachelheldevans.com](http://rachelheldevans.com). The views expressed in this column belong to Rachel Held Evans.*

[The Editors](#) - CNN Belief Blog

DRAFT

## ***R6: Church, Here's Why People are Leaving You (full article provided)***

### **Church, Here's Why People Are Leaving You. Part 1**

Being on the other side of the Exodus sucks, don't it?

I see the panic on your face, Church.

I know the internal terror as you see the statistics and hear the stories and scan the exit polls.

I see you desperately scrambling to do damage control for the fence-sitters, and manufacture passion from the shrinking faithful, and I want to help you.

You may think you know why people are leaving you, but I'm not sure you do.

You *think* it's because "the culture" is so lost, so perverse, so beyond help that they are all walking away. You believe that they've turned a deaf ear to the voice of God; chasing money, and sex, and material things.

You think that the gays and the Muslims and the Atheists and the pop stars have so screwed-up the morality of the world, that everyone is abandoning faith in droves.

But those aren't the reasons people are leaving you.

They aren't the problem, Church.

***You are the problem.***

Let me elaborate in 5 ways...

#### ***1) Your Sunday productions have worn thin.***

The stage, and the lights, and the bands, and the video screens, have all just become white noise to those really seeking to encounter God. They're ear and eye candy for an hour, but they have so little relevance in people's daily lives, that more and more of them are taking a pass.

Yeah the songs are cool and the show is great, but ultimately Sunday morning isn't really making a difference on Tuesday afternoon or Thursday evening, when people are wrestling with the awkward, messy, painful stuff in the trenches of life; the places where rock shows don't help.

We can be entertained *anywhere*. Until you can give us something more than a Christian-themed performance piece; something that allows us space and breath and conversation and relationship, many of us are going to sleep-in and stay away.

**2) *You speak in a foreign tongue.***

Church, you talk and talk and talk, but you do so using a dead language. You're holding on to dusty words that have no resonance in people's ears, not realizing that just saying those words *louder* isn't the answer. All the religious buzzwords that used to work 20 years ago, no longer do.

This spiritualized insider-language may give you some comfort in an outside world that is changing, but that stuff's just lazy religious shorthand, and it keeps regular people at a distance. They need you to speak in a language that they can understand. There's a message there worth sharing, but it's hard to hear above your verbal pyrotechnics.

People don't need to be dazzled with big, churchy words and about eschatological frameworks and theological systems. Talk to them plainly about love, and joy, and forgiveness, and death, and peace, and God, and they'll be all ears. Keep up the church-speak, and you'll be talking to an empty room soon.

**3) *Your vision can't see past your building.***

The coffee bar, the cushy couches, the high tech lights, the funky Children's wing and the uber-cool Teen Center are all top-notch... and costly. In fact, most of your time, money, and energy seems to be about luring people to where *you* are, instead of reaching people where they *already* are.

Rather than simply stepping out into the neighborhoods around you and partnering with the amazing things *already* happening, and the beautiful stuff God is *already* doing, you seem content to franchise out your particular brand of Jesus-stuff, and wait for the sinful world to beat down your door.

Your greatest mission field is just a few miles, (or a few feet) off your campus and you don't even realize it. You wanna reach the people you're missing?

Leave the building.

**4) *You choose lousy battles.***

We know you like to fight, Church. That's obvious.

When you want to, you can go to war with the best of them. The problem is, your battles are too darn small. Fast food protests, hobby store outrage, and duck-calling Reality TV show campaigns may manufacture some urgency and *Twitter* activity on the inside for the already-convinced, but they're paper tigers to people out here with bloody boots on the ground.

Every day we see a world suffocated by poverty, and racism, and violence, and bigotry, and hunger; and in the face of *that* stuff, you get awfully, frighteningly quiet. We wish you were as courageous in *those* fights, because then we'd feel like coming alongside you; then we'd feel like going to war with you.

Church, we need you to stop being warmongers with the trivial, and pacifists in the face of the terrible.

**5) *Your love doesn't look like love.***

Love seems to be a pretty big deal to you, but we're not getting that when the rubber meets the road. In fact, more and more, your brand of love seems incredibly selective and decidedly narrow; filtering out all the spiritual riff-raff, which sadly includes far too many of us.

It feels like a big bait-and-switch, sucker-deal; advertising a "Come As You Are" party, but letting us know once we're in the door that we can't really come as we are. We see a Jesus in the Bible, who hung out with lowlifes and prostitutes and outcasts, and loved them right there, but that doesn't seem to be your cup of tea.

*Church, can you love us if we don't check all the doctrinal boxes and don't have our theology all figured out?* It doesn't seem so.

*Can you love us if we cuss and drink and get tattoos, and God forbid, vote Democrat?* We're doubtful.

*Can you love us if we're not sure how we define love, and marriage, and Heaven, and Hell?* It sure doesn't feel that way.

From what we know about Jesus, we *think* he looks like love. The unfortunate thing is, you don't look much like him.

That's *part* of the reason people are leaving you, Church.

These words may get you really, really angry, and you may want to jump in a knee-jerk move to defend yourself or attack these positions line-by-line, but we hope that you won't.

We hope that you'll just sit in stillness with these words for a while, because whether you believe they're right or wrong, they're real to us, and that's the whole point.

We're the ones walking away.

We want to matter to you.

We want you to hear us before you debate us.

Show us that your love and your God are real.

Church, give us a reason to stay.

## Church, Here's Why People Are Leaving You. Part 2

It's not you, it's me.

*That's* what you seem to be saying, Church.

I tried to share my [heart](#) with you; the heart of me and thousands and thousands of people like me who are walking away, to let you know of the damage you're doing and the painful legacy you're leaving, and apparently; *you're* not the problem.

(Which of course, is still a problem).

I've relayed my frustration with your insider, religious rhetoric, and you responded by cut-and-pasting random Scripture soundbytes about the "Bride of Christ" and the "blood of the Lamb", insisting that the real issue is simply my "Biblical ignorance", and suggesting that I just need to repent and get a good Concordance (whatever that is).

I let you know how judged and ridiculed I feel when I'm with you, how much like a hopeless, failing outsider I feel on the periphery of your often inward, judgmental communities, and you proceeded to tell me how "lost" I am, how hopelessly "in love with my sin" I must be to leave you, reminding me that I never really belonged with you anyway.

In the face of every complaint and every grievance, you've made it clear that the *real* issue, is that I'm either sinful, heretical, immoral, foolish, unenlightened, selfish, consumerist, or ignorant.

Heck, many days I'm not even sure I disagree with you.

Maybe you're right, Church.

Maybe I *am* the problem.

Maybe it *is* me, but me is all I'm capable of being right now, and *that's* where I was really hoping you would meet me.

It's here, in my flawed, screwed-up, wounded, shell-shocked, doubting, disillusioned *me-ness*, that I've been waiting for you to step-in with this whole supposedly relentless, audacious "love of Jesus" thing I hear so much about, and make it real.

Church, I know how much you despise the word *Tolerance*, but right now, I really need you to tolerate

me; to tolerate those of us, who for all sorts of reasons you may feel aren't justified, are struggling to stay.

We're so weary of feeling like nothing more than a religious agenda; an argument to win, a point to make, a cause to defend, a soul to save.

We want to be more than a notch on your *Salvation belt*; another number to pad your *Twitter* posts and end-of-year stat sheets.

We need to be more than altar call props, who are applauded and high-fived down the aisle, and then forgotten once the song ends.

We've been praying for you to stop evangelizing us, and preaching at us, and fighting us, and judging us, and sin-diagnosing us, long enough to simply *hear* us...

... even if we *are* the problem.

Even if we *are* the woman in adultery, or the doubting follower, or the rebellious prodigal, or the demon-riddled young man, we can't be anything else right now in this moment; and in *this moment*, we need a Church big enough, and tough enough, and loving enough; not just for us as we might one day be *then*, but for us as we are, *now*.

We still believe that God is big enough, and tough enough, and loving enough, even if you won't be, and that's why even if we do walk away, it doesn't mean we're walking away from faith; it's just that faith right now seems more reachable elsewhere.

I know you'll argue that you're doing all these things and saying all these things *because* you love and care for us, but from the shoes we're standing in, you need to know that it feels less like love and care, and more like space and silence:

If someone is frustrated, telling them that they're wrong to be frustrated is, well, pretty freakin' frustrating.

*It only breeds distance.*

If someone shares that their heart is hurting, they don't want to hear that they're not right to be hurt.

*It's a conversation-stopper.*

If someone tells you they are starving for compassion, and relationship, and authenticity, the last thing they need is to be corrected for that hunger.

*It's a kick in the rear on the way out the door.*

So yes, Church, even if *you're* right, even if *we're* totally wrong; even if *we're* all petty, and self-centered, and hypocritical, and critical, and (I'll say it), "sinful", *we're* still the ones searching for a place where we can be known and belong; a place where it feels like God lives, and *you're* the ones who can show it to us.

Even if the problem *is* me, it's *me* who you're supposed to be reaching, Church.

So, for the love of God; reach already.

DRAFT

***R7: PCUSA Decline in Churches, Members Continued in 2013 (full article provided)***

The Presbyterian Church (USA) continued its years-long trend of losing congregations and members in 2013, according to statistics released by the mainline Protestant denomination last week.

According to the [data compiled](#) by the PCUSA's Office of the General Assembly, by the end of 2013 membership was approximately 1.76 million, compared to approximately 1.84 million by the end of 2012.

Additionally, the number of PCUSA congregations decreased during 2013. There were 10,038 churches in 2013, versus 10,262 in 2012.

Of the 224 churches no longer with PCUSA, 148 of them were dismissed to other denominations while the remaining number were dissolved.

For the third straight year, the number of dismissed congregations [increased](#), having been 21 in 2011, 110 in 2012, and 148 in 2013.

The Rev. Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the PCUSA General Assembly, said in a statement that he saw hope in the numbers, given that the overall decline was diminishing compared to previous years.

"Yes, the numbers reflect a decrease in active members in the denomination ... But the numbers also illustrate fewer losses than the previous year. The membership declined by 89,296 in 2013, compared to 102,791 in 2012," [said Parsons](#).

According to the PCUSA General Assembly Mission Council, in 2000 the denomination had over 2.5 million members. Over the past decade the entire denomination lost over 20 percent of its membership.

In 2011, PCUSA membership [fell below the 2 million mark](#), with the denomination experiencing a decline of 63,804 members and the loss of 96 congregations in that same year.

Regarding the 2011 numbers, Stated Clerk Parsons released a statement saying that there were two major challenges before the Presbyterian denomination to reverse the losses.

"The first and primary need is to continue to increase our efforts to live out the Great Commission and share the good news of Jesus Christ," [said Parsons in 2011](#). "The second is to connect with the growing number of the 'Spiritual But Not Religious.'"

One of the causes of the declining number of congregations in the PCUSA was the creation of the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians, a theologically conservative body.

Formed in early 2012 in response to the PCUSA allowing for practicing homosexuals to be ordained as ministers, many of the congregations dismissed from the PCUSA have proceeded to seek affiliation with the ECO.

Congregations that have recently left for the ECO have included the 4,000-member Highland Park Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the 3,500-plus member Menlo Park Presbyterian Church of California.

By the end of 2013, the ECO had its hundredth congregation join the Reformed body, and will hold its 2014 National Gathering in Dallas, Texas, come August.

For its part, the PCUSA has launched efforts to counter its membership and congregation declines. One such endeavor, the 1001 Movement, seeks to plant over 1,000 new worshipping communities over the next decade.

Already 200 new communities have been initiated under the movement, which given their status of not being official congregations yet means they were not counted in the 2013 statistics.

A positive number in the recently released statistics found that church spending on local and non-local missions had increased by a total of approximately \$7.45 million.

"What we are seeing in many of our congregations, old and new, is a commitment to more fully engage in their communities," [said Parsons](#).

"That means the number of lives our 10,038 congregations are touching in any given week far supersedes what the membership figures reflect."



## R8: Downtown Churches Growing Younger (full article provided)

# s growing younger



Mayra Beltrán / Houston Chronicle  
and Kaitlyn Bowie and music  
light, draw The Source's  
Christian and gospel roots.

additional 9,000 in neighborhoods on its periphery, First Baptist Church offers Sunday services for young adults in a renovated chapel fitted with modern sound and lighting gear. The sermon is simulcast from the main church, said spokesman Mikel Allen, but the music worship has a decidedly contemporary feel.

The 153-year-old church also offers a Wednesday night event, often featuring guest speakers.

"We have speakers from the business community, the science community talking about why they believe and how that interacts with everyday life," Allen said. "A few weeks ago we had a physicist talking about how science and scripture actually go together, quarks and string theory and the big bang and how it all was directed by God."

In Dallas, with about 7,000 people living in the heart of downtown, First Presbyterian Church is reaching out to young adults through resident seminarians funded by a religious endowment and through construction of an

will be staged.

Adult education director Bonnie Edwards said her church is "pretty traditional." "We don't have a rock band," she said. But, she added, many 18-34-year-olds find fulfillment in the church's more traditional programs, notably its "Stew Pot" ministry to the homeless. About 17 percent of the church's members are young adults, she said.

The Rev. Elaine Heath, a professor at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology, said a sense of community is important to young adults returning to city centers.

"Twenty-something urbanites tend to have a stronger social conscience than their parents," she said.

"The church that wishes to reach out to young urbanites needs to understand that they aren't so worried about the style of worship music as they are about the authenticity of life of the people of the church," she said. "They want the worship gathering to be meaningful and well-planned, to be sure, but they want the faith community to be a real community, actively involved in both spiritual formation and justice issues in their city and the world."

Heath's observations resonated with Hagans, who as an undergraduate sociology student at Stanford University planned a career in politics. Then he became involved with an intervarsity Christian group whose members directed their ambitions to inner-city teaching and other godly vocations of social change.

"Part of the presidential thing was, as the most powerful person in the world, being able to do good

tual and faith-based groups have a role to play that politicians and government can't. That was my call to a vocation in the church."

With a divinity degree from Duke University and a background with white and black Houston-area churches, Hagans joined First Methodist's staff last year as part of an outreach to downtown's homeless community.

### Making a family

Hagans and his colleagues provided homeless people food and hygiene kits, but they worked, too, to understand and appreciate them as people. They spent time talking and praying with them; they celebrated birthdays.

"Our goal," Hagans said, "was to make disciples for Jesus."

Bowie, too, holds a divinity degree from the elite North Carolina university, pursuing her religious studies only after teaching third grade for four years at Aldine Independent School District. Together with other program leaders, she attends Sunday evening sessions with a "launch team" of young adults typical of those to be served by the new ministry.

"We're still in the visioning and creating process. We have a lot of beautiful visions that probably will get worked out in our being in a family together," said Bowie.

"Right now we're eating together, digging deeply into scripture ... intimately talking about the ways we are broken, what it means to become 'new creations.' Really it's quite simple: We want to be a family that crosses the different lines that divide us from God's

**R9: For Church Leaders (partial article provided)**

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community events  
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months?

**Get to know the members.**

As Joan Gray points out in her insightful book "Spiritual Leadership for Church Officers, A Handbook," it definitely takes time to establish positive communication and trust between teaching elders and members. As she suggests, authority flows from the character and actions of the pastor and the church leaders. The people want to know that the new pastor has a serious commitment to the congregation and is not in it for the short term. They look for good

intentions in their leaders. "A congregation will not trust someone whom they believe is trying to undermine the good of the church," writes Gray.

**The people want to know that the new pastor has a serious commitment to the congregation and is not in it for the short term. They look for good intentions in their leaders.**

One way to establish trust and healthy relationships is to have small dinners or coffee hours in homes in each neighborhood (or in the church fellowship hall or a nearby restaurant) to create space for plenty of time to talk and get acquainted. If it is clear that the pastor likes (loves) the members and is glad to be with them, they will respond in kind. Discussion could

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day and demanded  
! It took a few min-

be limited to two non-threatening questions: "What are you most proud of in your church?" and "What would you do to make it better?" Answers can be reported back to the session and congregation and become building blocks to develop major goals for the next few years.

In subsequent articles we will examine other intentional steps that leaders may take in their first year together as they work to build a ministry that has a productive potential for many years.

## ***R10: How do we let go of Sunday Morning (full article provided)***

### **How do we let go of Sunday morning?**

June 25, 2014 in Community, Congregational Transformation, Mainline Decline, ministry, mission

By Rev. Mindi

One recent Sunday morning, I looked out over the empty pews and I thought to myself, “what can be done to get people here?” Then I thought of all the “regulars” who weren’t here, and I thought to myself, “What can be done to get the ‘regulars’ to come back?”

Then I wondered why am I so worried about Sunday mornings?

I’d fallen into the Sunday morning trap again—the idea that “church” is the thing we do on Sunday mornings only, that “church” is the place we go for an hour on Sunday. We’ve known, from the beginning of our movement, as Paul talks about us in 1 Corinthians 12, that the church is the body of Christ. It’s like that old song we sang in Sunday School: “The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a *people*...” We all know this, and yet, we fall into the trap again and again and again.

When I looked beyond the empty pews, beyond Sunday, I remembered all the volunteers we had for the last two weekends for our annual Rummage Sale. I recalled all the neighbors who came out, who not only perused our “treasures” but also sat down over a hot dog and chatted with us about their lives. I remember the people who lined up for pies on Saturday morning. I also remembered the Women’s group that gathered earlier that month for lunch, the two Young Adult Pub Theology gatherings, and the bags of donations that appeared in the office for the local women’s shelter.

Why are we so caught up on Sunday morning? Why is Sunday morning still the litmus test as to whether or not a church is healthy or viable?

Money.

Sure, we receive money at our Rummage Sale or other events, but the main way we keep our lights on, pay the pastor (me) and fund the missions and ministries of the church is through the Sunday morning offering. And if people don't come on Sunday, they are not necessarily going to give financially—mainly because we don't ask.

What if...

We offered other ways for people to give to the church—online giving, card readers, QR-codes on the bulletin?

We encouraged giving at other times, at other opportunities, to share in the ministry and fellowship of the congregation?

We counted our blessings in the people we reach out to, the small groups, and the missions and ministries we offer instead of persons in pews?

And what if... dare I say it?

We changed *everything*.

What if we weren't as concerned about being financially viable as we were about the ministries and missions we share in?

What if we sold our buildings, moved to partner with other congregations, or started meeting in public spaces such as schools, libraries, coffee shops, or other locations?

What if we all, when we pledge our finances to the church, also pledged our time, our gifts, our talents? What if we took a share in the work of the church, each of us?

This might mean that...

Pastors could no longer survive on a congregational salary alone. Let's face it—a number of our pastors are already bi-vocational and many of us do not meet denominational standards for compensation. It would mean that seminaries would have to completely change because those going into ministry wouldn't be able to afford the three-year master's degree, knowing that they would be coming out with debt (five, but often six figures worth of debt).

And this is already happening—seminaries are closing, or completely going online. Students take one or two classes at a time while working a full-time job. I'll say it again: *this is already happening*.

We would have to all change—the church, the pastor, the body of Christ.

We would have to change everything. But we might be able to do something radical.

We might be able to follow Jesus differently.

I'll raise my hand: I'm scared of this. I have loans to pay off. I have other debts. I need to provide for my family. But as it is, I serve two congregations part-time. I am surviving. I also love what I am doing. I have begun to change. But it's time for the church to recognize this isn't temporary.

This is the new normal.

DRAFT

***R11: The Engaging Church (available by request)***

Course notes provided separately

<http://www.churchgrowth.net/seminars/>

DRAFT

***R12: Leading Beyond the Walls (full book - not provided)***

<http://www.amazon.com/Leading-Beyond-Walls-Developing-Congregations/dp/142675485X>

DRAFT

***R13: We Can Do That ("We Can Do That" provided separately)***

Michael Warden, writing for Leadership Network, puts the church's situation and opportunity clearly. "In the last half of the 20th century, the American religious landscape was transformed. Commitment to traditional church structures steadily waned, while at the same time our hunger for spiritual fulfillment inched its way into the forefront of the cultural dialog. For the first time in our history as a nation, the concept of Truth began to lose its status as an independent reality. Instead, Truth became relative, dependent on an individual's circumstance or perspective."

"This is a sign of the times...only one among many. The culture is shifting. And many of the established paradigms by which churches have operated for decades can no longer support a populace that is looking for Truth outside the "box" created by our predecessors. By necessity, the 21<sup>st</sup> century church is becoming more flexible and organic, adapting and changing to engage the culture that surrounds it.

"This new environment is giving rise to a fundamental 're-design' of how the church carries out its mission. To be effective, churches once thought (and many still think) that all they needed to do was maintain certain expected church programs, provide a sanctuary where members could gather and worship, perhaps send out work teams into the community, or support missionaries at various locations around the globe. Effective missional churches in today's culture are breaking new ground, trying new approaches, and going back to the blueprint provided in Scripture to show them how to become an authentic 'city on a hill that cannot be hidden.'"(From *the 2004 presentation by Mike Cole - SouthminsterRetreatPresentation-01172004*).

- e. Full article of above 2004 presentation by Mike Cole is provided separately
- f. Presentation by Mike Cole at 2013 Officer Enrichment - not available yet
- g. <http://www.vitalchurchesinstitute.com/pages/acts-16-5>
- h. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/What-is-Transformational-Church>
- i. Note that WPC had an Acts 16.5 task force - Feb. 2006  
Linda Thomas  
Jennifer Carr  
Al Manson  
Nina Moede  
Wade Barclay  
Deborah Cooper  
Helen DeLeon

***R14: Growing Healthy Churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)(provided separately)***

*Growing Healthy Churches* is the fifth volume in a continuing series produced by the Board of Pensions. Like its predecessor volumes, this resource is dedicated to supporting healthy ministers and ministry across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The series began with the publication of *Report on Clergy Recruitment and Retention to the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. The second and third volumes were *Conversations on Candidacy and Supporting Mid-Career Pastors*, respectively. The fourth booklet, *Transitions in Ministry*, focused on those significant moments that occur over the course of every pastor's vocational journey. This fifth volume focuses on how the church might "grow." It is well known that since the beginning of the Christian Era, the Body of Christ has been, and continues to be, but one generation from extinction. We do not inherit the faith. It is only passed on to another generation when one believer tells an individual about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. If someone did not share that story of Good News with us, we would not be a part of the church. Others have said that evangelism is an individual sharing a cup of water to a thirsty seeker. Over the past four decades, the Presbyterian Church has not been particularly successful in telling that "old, old story." In fact, since the reunion of the UPCUSA and the PCUS in 1983, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has lost 847,680 members and dissolved 1,140 churches. If our church does not begin to take more seriously the need to share the story, the denomination is in danger of becoming extinct.

2009

PUB-503 3/09

<http://www.pensions.org/AvailableResources/BookletsandPublications/Documents/pub-503.pdf>

Full text provided separately.

## ***R15: Beyond Bricks and Mortar(full article provided)***

### *Tearing Down the Walls*

Jessica Tate

December 6, 2013

*Each month we ask a different person from the NEXT Church community to assemble a series of posts around a particular theme.*

### ***Beyond Bricks and Mortar***

by Ellie Roscher

A former student of mine works for an e-commerce start up company whose office is in an old church in Minneapolis. He shares the church office space with his co-workers – a priest who got into real estate to make ends meet and a man who started a grain-based veggie burger business. The church started renting its space out during the week to small businesses for the financial benefit of everyone. This worship space/business office collaboration makes sense. Being some of the biggest community spaces in the neighborhood, churches can engage in a ministry of shared space. Sharing becomes not only a creative, mutually symbiotic idea, but in some cases a financial necessity. Boundaries that used to separate church and life are blurring.

Seminaries are following suit by thinking of ways to get creative with space.

- Can seminaries require our students to move their families to our campus for three years?
- Can they afford to own all of these buildings?
- How do seminaries get students out into the world?
- Seminaries are exploring online classes and regional campuses.
- They are experimenting with seminary intensives followed up with life-long continuing education.
- They are considering inter-campus and inter-denominational collaboration, wider definitions of call and on-going internships during coursework.

This shift honors the financial need and a generational shift in thoughts about faith. Theological education is moving to the context of the entire world, not just within seminary buildings.

When walls come down, some people get scared. We get attached to the boundaries we build. Redefining space with fewer walls can, however, build community, enhance academic rigor and promote God's love in the world.

A few decades ago, many people went to work from 9-5 Monday through Friday. Family time happened at night while church happened on Sunday mornings. The walls that used to separate worship time from the rest of our lives are dissolving. More people are working from home, telecommuting, or working multiple jobs and taking odd hours. Millennials, loosely people born between 1980 and 1996, are driving the change. They don't want church boxed into Sundays, limited to a building, quarantined from our daily lives. They don't want to see God's call for our lives as

only what we get paid to do, but our entire life's work. They want to make a difference in their communities, and they see that as church. They want their church to be relevant in the world first.

In her Human Resource Magazine article "Mixing It Up," Adrienne Fox reminds us that Millennials are optimistic. They love collaboration and consensus building. Some believe Millennials view power as organic – it grows when shared. Churches and seminaries are finding it challenging to connect with Millennials with their existing models. Millennials grew up watching religious extremism lead to 9-11. They watched sexual scandals covered up in multiple faiths and denominations, the co-opting of the religious right by republican politicians and infighting in mainline protestant denominations. Young people are skeptical of a church that stays locked up away from the world. Diana Butler Bass in *Christianity After Religion* tells us that young people want the old church order of believing, behaving, belonging to shift to the ancient approach of belonging, behaving, believing. They want churches to be counter-cultural prophetic voices relevant to the world. They want societal transformation. The networks are interconnected and dependent on each other. The walls are coming down.

I see this shift as more than just a choice to see opportunity instead of crisis. I see the shift as a reclaiming of the Gospel. Jesus' ministry happened wherever and whenever it needed to happen. He did not only teach in the synagogue. He did not heal people just on Sabbath. Walls could not contain his ministry, his love. The early church that started worshipping Jesus met in homes, in small groups, and we are seeing a swing back to that model in our context. What's coming in our seminaries is training our leaders to celebrate the dissolving of walls – training leaders to think collaboratively, share power to grow it, and get out into the communities and be part of the revolution.

*Ellie Roscher is the author of [How Coffee Saved My Life, and Other Stories of Stumbling to Grace](#) and has appeared multiple times in [The Thoughtful Christian](#), [Spirit Magazine](#), [Alive Magazine](#) and [DAPS Zine](#). She also edited [Keeping the Faith in Seminary](#) and [Keeping the Faith in Education](#) for [Avenida Books](#). Ellie holds a master's degree in Theology from Luther Seminary and an MFA in Writing from Sarah Lawrence College. Find her writing at [ellieroscher.com](#) and [Keeping the Faith Today](#). Follow her @ellieroscher.*

<http://nextchurch.net/tearing-walls/>

***R16: Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas (full article provided separately)***

·  
“*Teaching & Learning with the iGeneration: Perspectives, Strategies, & Ideas*”

John Roberto

An article from *Lifelong Faith* Fall 2010 – Theme of Children’s Faith Formation. The focus of this article is to help convey how the iGeneration learns.

Note: The iGeneration includes early 30’s down to elementary school kids

[http://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/lifelong\\_faith\\_journal\\_4.3.pdf](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/lifelong_faith_journal_4.3.pdf)

Full article provided separately

DRAFT

## ***R17: The Emergent Church (example articles provided)*** **We're Starting a New Presbyterian Church**

[Bruce Reyes-Chow February 28, 2012 faith & religion, media & technology, read](#)

There are times when some things in life just make sense. What might seem like a foolish and risky endeavor to one person might be a natural convergence of clarity and call to another. With that said, after nearly a year since I announced the end of my time at a church that I helped to plant over a decade ago, it's with a deep sense of call that I am again entering the world of church planting.

But wait, there's more.

For generations the idea of "church" has been bound by proximity, physical structures and time. Sure, many have been creative within these bounds, but most have nevertheless been limited by them. The past 10+ years has also seen the increased influence of social media on culture that has created profound opportunities for people to engage the breadth of the human experience and find genuine community. Many churches have found ways to integrate the use of social media into congregational life, but most are centered around the idea that the community begins at one central location and that particular experience is amplified by the use of social media. For a while now I have had an inkling that the "social media amplifies the local church" paradigm could be flipped upside-down resulting in a powerful way to be church. If this shift were to be taken seriously, some interesting questions are raised:

What if a church decided that the discipline of following Christ and building genuine Christian community could be lived out without everyone having to actually be in one place at one time?

What if a church unapologetically leveraged online tools to be a community no longer bound by architecture, time and physical proximity?

What if a church that met online believed that even a historic religious tradition like the Presbyterian Church (USA) can be expressed in new ways?

Essentially . . . can church be church when it is primarily lived and manifested online?

We'll ask "What if?" no longer because the church that I am planting is going to be one that tries to answer these questions. Peering through the lens of social media, I am excited to push the bounds of traditional church formation, while maintaining all that is good about traditional church. To be clear, the online nature of this idea certainly creates great technological possibilities, but my intention is that we will build just a church like any church: one that worships, serves, studies and prays together . . . we will just happen to gather online. There will be no justifications seeking legitimacy, no quotes inferring that this is not a "real church" and no posture that we are competing for people, resources or notoriety . . . just a church.

As I dive into this, I have had some exploratory conversations with people who might be part of such a church, received some initial feedback from denominational folks and have prayed x 3 about it. but like any church plant, there is much to do in order get ready for any kind of official launch. At this early stage it is tempting to come out launching a high-functioning and slick “product,” but we realize that if this is to truly be a church and not just a dispenser of religious services, the final mission, vision, form and function must be formed and owned by the community. At the same time, I know that some will need to know a little more before deciding whether or not to get involved. So to give a taste, here is a little bit of what I am thinking in terms of initial focus and tone . . .

Spiritual and Religious – This is not just about getting together and being Christians in isolation who randomly connect online, but about developing disciplines that help us to grow into who God intends.

Gracious and Progressive – While spirited theological and political disagreement will be welcomed, stridency and rigidity is not how we will approach difficult issues. We will be a church that will live under the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA): ones sexual orientation or gender are not barriers to leadership, reproductive options are important, capital punishment should be abolished, etc.

Reformed and Presbyterian – Reformed and always reforming according to the Word of God is central to our ongoing search for God’s intentions for each of us. As we seek to know the will of God and mind of Christ, we do so honoring all voices, no matter how small.

Open and Sourced – While all people who are part of this community are ministers in their own right, we also know that some roles will require particular gifts and skills. The life of the community will move along with a collaborative spirit, but leadership will also be tasked with guiding and shaping the process in a way that moves forward. The circle will definitely widen, but the initial leadership team is currently made up of: [Katie Mulligan](#), Teaching Elder, NJ; [Stephen Salyards](#), Ruling Elder, CA; [Mihee Kim-Kort](#), Teaching Elder, IN; [Derrick Weston](#), Teaching Elder, OH; [Jack Jenkins](#), Seminary Student, MA; Jennifer Owen Walsh, NC and myself, Teaching Elder in CA. [Delayed add since Bridgett Green, Teaching Elder and PhD Candidate, TN]

Inward and Outward . . . but mostly outward – This is not about building up a crazy number of followers, friends or likes. This is about creating community that finds healing, discipline and love SO that we get the heck out into the world and do some good. From our tent-making pastoral leadership to our programs to our finances the outward nature of this community will be self-evident.

. . . and this is where we do it all through the lens of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Again I know that there are many of questions that we need to address before a full launch – “What about X?” and “How will we do X?” - but I also know that only way this new church will be able to respond well is to keep widening the circle of involvement. With this in mind our first step is to gauge the interest of folks and begin to gather people for some conversations and planning. Some of you are ready to dive right in, others will want nothing to do with this craziness and still others of you will need to lurk around the edges until the time is right. However you might see yourself connected to

this church that has yet to be named, as we begin to build up a spiritual community, develop organizational strategies and start being church together, you are invited to [JOIN OUR FACEBOOK PAGE](#) and FILL OUT THE SURVEY BELOW.

There is definitely more to come and I look forward to walking this journey with some of you. Please pass this along to any folks who you think might also be interested.

<http://www.reyes-chow.com/2012/02/new-presbyterian-church/>

Three years ago, I posted this *I am emergence post* as a confession of sorts . . . none of which has to do with a group of leaders, a “movement” or a defined set of beliefs.

because I believe that Jesus called us into individual and communal lives that are inspired and fueled by the wonderfully ambiguous, immeasurable and nuanced challenge of BEING the church;

because I believe the “T”ruth that God speaks to humanity must be discovered and rediscovered through a consistent and exhibited life of shared authority, communal theologizing and institutional fluidity;

because I believe that the political, theological and ecclesiastical “other” is discerning God’s calling on their lives just as faithfully as I am, but do not feel the need to stay in relationships that are confined by false, forced or unjust relationships;

because I embrace, respect and stand up for world that is does not exist in controllable and unyielding bounds of culture, class, sexuality, gender, economies, geography . . . ;

and because I just am.

[www.reyes-chow.com/tag/emergence-christianity/](http://www.reyes-chow.com/tag/emergence-christianity/)

## **R18: 1001 worshipping communities (example article provided)**

### A. **1001 worshipping communities-** Create 1001 new communities in a decade

*A New Worshipping Community is...*

*Brief Definition*

#### **New**

*Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ*

*Taking on varied forms of church for our changing culture*

#### **Worshipping**

*Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament*

*Sent by the Spirit to join God's mission for the transformation of the world*

#### **Community**

*Practicing mutual care and accountability*

*Developing sustainability in leadership and finances*

*Long Definition*

#### **New**

**Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ** - NWCs witness in word and deed (1 John 3:18), continuing Jesus' own mission of discipling, feeding, teaching, healing, welcoming, crossing boundaries, and proclaiming God's coming realm. Those with new and renewed faith join the Spirit's transforming work in the world.

**Taking on varied forms of church for our changing culture** - Living out the Gospel demands ministry which engages today's cultures (John 1:14). New ways of joining Christians together for contextual ministry will use current and historic ways of "being church" as springboards for creative innovation (Matt 9:17).

#### **Worshipping**

**Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament** - We seek to hear, come to believe, and are equipped to live the promises of God revealed in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. NWCs welcome new members of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) through Baptism and are nourished by Christ's spiritual presence in the Lord's Supper.

**Sent by the Spirit to join God's mission for the transformation of the world** - The Spirit impels us outward, so that worshipers participate in the redemption of the world in Christ (Col 1:20). Therefore, the primary beneficiaries of the NWC are not its own members, but rather its community and world.

#### **Community**

**Practicing mutual care and accountability** - We commit ourselves to love one another (John 13:34) in relationships of mutual care and accountability, as faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Entrusting ourselves and the church to the Holy Spirit, we seek to grow to maturity in faith and life.

**Developing sustainability in leadership and finances** - As distinct yet connected expressions of the body of Christ, NWCs have local leadership arising from their own community of faith (Exodus 18:21). Pastoral leadership, facilities, and programs are all appropriately structured in order to demonstrate good and faithful stewardship.

**Responding to Christ's gift and call, we do all these things only by God's grace, seeking—above all else—to glorify God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

<http://www.onethousandone.org/About/Definitions.aspx>

DRAFT

### ***R19: NeXT Church (example information provided)***

*The mission of NEXt Church is  
to foster relationships among God's people:*

*sparking imaginations;*

*connecting congregations;*

*offering a distinctively Presbyterian witness to Jesus Christ.*

*Trusting in God's sovereignty and grace,*

*NEXt Church will engage the church that is becoming by cultivating vital connections,  
celebrating emerging leadership and innovation, and*

*working with congregations and leaders to form and reform faith communities.*

#### **What is NEXt Church?**

NEXt Church is a network of leaders across the Presbyterian Church (USA) who believe the church of the future will be more relational, more diverse, more collaborative, more hopeful and more agile.

We provide hopeful space for robust conversations about theology, culture, and the practice of ministry, to serve as a catalyst for new mission callings, and to support strong leadership in a time of adaptive change.

We are fostering a conversation about how to follow Christ in our particular day and age. We are a movement seeking to change the culture of connection in the PC(USA) so that we continue to share faithfully the good news of the gospel in ways that bear fruit in a fractured world.

#### **Can I join NEXt Church?**

You can! Join NEXt by participating in the conversation, doing innovative ministry in your community, and coming to regional and national gatherings to share what you've learned and be inspired by others.

Offer your financial support so that we can continue to connect leaders and create space for generative conversation.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter and sign up for our email newsletter to stay in touch with what's going on.

#### **How do I support what NEXt is doing?**

Pray for God's Spirit to connect and guide us.

Mark your calendar for the 2014 national gathering in Minneapolis Mar. 31-Apr. 1, 2014.

Attend or host a regional gathering. Bring a friend or colleague to a NEXT gathering. Better yet, bring a clergy friend and a lay leader.

Offer your financial support.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@nextpcusa) and sign up for our email newsletter.

### **What's a regional gathering?**

NEXT Church regional gatherings are popping up around the country, propelled by momentum and hope generated at the NEXT National Gatherings.

They are opportunities to deepen relationships locally with other leaders in the PC(USA) to encourage greater partnerships around shared mission actions and creative, exciting ministry opportunities.

What dream do you have for God's kingdom in your local community? Affordable housing for seniors? An innovative youth leaders network? Robust campus ministry? These are the kinds of ideas the regional gatherings will embrace and explore. The particulars will depend on the passions of the participants.

Find a regional gathering near you on our website.

### **Is NEXT Church leaving the PC(USA)?**

Absolutely not! We believe that God is not done with the PC(USA). Throughout our denomination, creative leaders are engaged in ministries that embody the gospel in fresh ways, serve Christ, and speak a transforming word to contemporary culture. By connecting with one another and building networks with shared mission callings, we can expand the impact of these ministries beyond anything any one congregation can accomplish alone.

### **How is NEXT Church structured?**

NEXT Church is a network of leaders across the PC(USA). The more people who are a generative part of this movement, the better. NEXT Church's leadership team seeks to give overarching direction to our collective work. The Advisory Team offers counsel and helps spread the word about the hopeful space NEXT offers. A smaller group from this team serves as the Strategy Team which meets 3-4 times a year, sets the agenda and makes decisions. NEXT Church recently called a Director, the Reverend Jessica Tate, to help keep us on track.

### **How is NEXT funded?**

We are funded through generous support of congregations and individuals.

<http://nextchurch.net/>

*Welcome to the NeXT Church*

by [Charles Trueheart](#)

*The Atlantic Monthly Digital Edition*

Seamless multimedia worship, round-the-clock niches of work and service, spiritual guidance, and a place to belong: in communities around the country the old order gives way to the new

<http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/96aug/nxtchrch/nxtchrch.htm>

DRAFT

## ***R20: Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation(full article provided)***

### ***Evolving Sunday School into Faith Formation***

A summary of a current and on-going discussion happening in Christian Education  
by Linda Smith-Gregory, WPC Children's Ministry

Faith Formation is a lifelong journey. As Jesus did, we grow in strength and wisdom. We need to take our faith on this journey with us. Faith formation happens in many ways and venues. It is not limited to Sunday school or worship, although they are important parts of our faith journey. We need to have more touch points with experiences and relationships that will help our faith to grow. These things may not happen on Sunday or even at 201 W NASA Parkway. We already have many of these touch points. Small groups, choir, teams, mission, and more are part of our faith journey. But there are important times, call them milestones, that seem to pass by when they should be marked as important parts of our faith journey, both as individuals and as a community.

A milestone is a meaningful, memorable moment in the lives of individuals and communities. Our faith milestones are markers along life's journey that say, "This is something important, and God is here, too." It is a faith formation practice for both home and congregation that helps all generations recognize God's presence in everyday life.

Baptism, weddings, confirmation, beginning school, getting a driver's license, graduation, anniversaries, retirement, becoming a deacon or elder and returning from military deployment can all be faith milestones. They can:

- connect faith with daily life experiences;
- promote Christian faith formation and outreach into the larger community, reaching out beyond the church walls;
- use faith practices to deepen the Christian foundation in people's lives; and
- bless and enrich relationships of family, friends and the entire church community.

***R21: The Apostles of Apollo (full book - not provided)***

<http://apostlesofapollo.com/>

DRAFT

***R22: The Little White Church on NASA Road 1 (full book not provided)***

<http://www.amazon.com/Little-White-Church-NASA-Road/dp/B0006F11K2>

<http://www.websterpresby.org/content.cfm?id=329>

DRAFT

***R23: Many Churches Experiencing Decline (full article provided)***

## **Many Churches Experiencing Decline**

*The Wired Word* for the Week of September 28, 2014

### **In the News**

Many churches in the United States, regardless of denomination, are in decline, facing a downturn in attendance and participation. As a means to facilitate conversation about this concern, we at *The Wired Word* suggest two media pieces.

One is an editorial by Tom Ehrich, first published by *Religion News Service* and then picked up by *The Washington Post*. Ehrich, a church consultant and Episcopal priest, was responding to a letter issued earlier this month by the Taskforce on Reimagining the Episcopal Church -- a group formed to consider how to restructure that denomination at the national level to stem the decline in membership and attendance at the local level. Ehrich's response was not limited to the Episcopal Church, but applies to mainline denominations in general.

The other is an interview with John S. Dickerson, senior pastor of Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church in Prescott, Arizona, who recently published a book called *The Great Evangelical Recession*, which, as the title suggests, is about a decline in evangelical Christianity.

In the United States, "mainline" usually refers to Protestant denominations that have supported a "social gospel" approach to ministry and mission and are often described as liberal or progressive in theology. "Evangelical" usually refers to Protestant denominations that have focused primarily on individual salvation through Jesus Christ and are often described as conservative in theology and in social matters. But there is much overlap in the understanding of the gospel and in the practices of mainline and evangelical Christians and congregations. (Some Christian groups define themselves more precisely and wouldn't put themselves in either the mainline or the evangelical category.)

Denominations of various ministry practices and theologies have some congregations that are either growing or holding their own, but the common thread of concern for many Protestant churches of all persuasions (a concern shared by the Roman Catholic Church) is declining participation.

In Ehrich's article, he noted that mainline denominations are these days considering how to reinvent themselves because of "50 years of decline." He points out that collectively, mainline denominations are down from their 1965 peak by more than 42 percent, and "two-thirds below the level they could have been if they had simply kept growing with the population."

Dickerson sees a similar downtrend in evangelical churches. He says that evangelicals have an inflated view of their numbers, influence and financial stability. The reality, said Dickerson, "is that we are a much smaller movement than many of us have believed -- certainly not a majority of the United States, and, I believe, a gradually declining minority. Many of us attend growing churches that are attracting folks from other churches, so we have the perception that 'the church' is growing, when she's really just shuffling. Meanwhile, as we play musical churches, the broader population is growing."

He further says that evangelical churches are "bleeding out young people," a problem common in mainline groups as well.

Dickerson cites four independent studies that separately conclude that evangelical Christians are between 7 and 8.9 percent of the U.S. population.

Among the reasons usually mentioned for the downward trend in churches is the growth in the number of younger people who now identify themselves as "nones" -- that is, having no religion -- or who say they are "spiritual but not religious." Another reason is public dislike of social positions some evangelical groups have taken. But mainline churches that have embraced different positions have also experienced decline. Other reasons include cultural changes, increased religious pluralism, growing secularity, a more aggressive atheism, more competition from other activities, the perception of many that the church is irrelevant to their lives, church splits and more.

In his article, Ehrich said, "Local congregations are still doing mission and ministry in ways that don't work but are difficult to change." Three specific "ways that don't work" he named are Sunday worship, facilities designed primarily for large-group worship and congregations that face inward instead of outward.

"Sunday worship," said Ehrich, "hasn't been a growth engine for decades and now isn't even a survival strategy." While acknowledging that Sunday worship is the thing mainline congregations usually do best, he said it "fails to reach younger populations and fails to retain the interest of older populations." He added, "Audience-style religion fails to transform lives."

Regarding facilities, Ehrich said they are not only expensive, but are often "designed for weekly worship" and thus fail to engage anyone outside of the shrinking group of Sunday attendees. "Even the idea of a central location for community life misfires in an age of fragmentation," Ehrich said. "People connect with peers in smaller settings or self-determining networks. Facilities built for en-masse-style gatherings are no longer relevant."

About the direction congregations "face," Ehrich said, "Congregations that could be facing outward and grappling with the mounting woes of a society in free fall do the opposite: They face inward, with occasional sorties into mission. They pick symbolic battles, but don't convincingly send members out to make the world better."

Yet even if churches were to innovate in the areas Ehrich indicated, there's no guarantee that such changes would bring people back.

Dickerson has a different diagnosis concerning problems in evangelical Christianity and offers different solutions. "My heart ... is not that we be liked by the culture. My heart is that we be faithful to Christ," he said. "Based on what Jesus said, I do expect us to be hated in this world, but that's sort of a footnote in the book. The real questions I ask in the book are: Are we fulfilling our purpose as Christ's presence in the United States? And, are we being the ambassadors of 'good news' that Christ calls us to be?"

Dickerson sees the main problem not merely as a decline in numbers so much as a decline in faithfulness to the church's mission of proclaiming the gospel. He does not look for structural change as a path to improvement, but a change of heart and an evangelical movement defined not by "whom we oppose" but by "grace and truth."

Dickerson has not lost hope. He says God's prescription for a church in conflict is found in 1 Peter 2:12: "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Denominational Restructuring Won't Work; Local Churches Must Innovate. \*Washington Post\*](#)  
[The Great Evangelical Recession? An Interview With John Dickerson. \*The Gospel Coalition\*](#)  
[How to Shrink Your Church in One Easy Step. \*Juicy Ecumenism: Institute on Religion & Democracy's Blog\*](#)

### **The Big Questions**

*Here are some of the questions we will discuss in class:*

1. Is survival of a local church a worthy goal for that church? Why or why not? If so, whose responsibility is it to ensure its survival? How do circumstances affect the worthiness of the goal?
2. Are we who are part of the church called to innovate on behalf of the church? Is part of our calling to be effective? If not, what is our calling?
3. Is declining attendance a sign that Christendom is doing something wrong or a sign that society has gone wrong or a sign of something else? To what degree, if any, should we be willing to reshape the church in response to the spirit of the age? Why?
4. If a congregation were to innovate in the three areas Ehrich recommends, do you think it would make a difference in how many people would attend that church? Why or why not? Is Ehrich even right in identifying these three areas as contributing to the downslide? If we knew for sure such changes would not affect how many people participated in our church, should we make those changes anyway?
5. Is it important to be part of both *the* church and a church? Explain your answer.

### **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

We will look at selected verses from these Scripture texts. You may wish to read these in advance for background:

[Micah 4:1-4](#)

[Matthew 16:13-20](#)

[Zechariah 8:1-13](#)

[Matthew 7:13-14](#)

[Matthew 16:24-26](#)

*In class, we will talk about these passages and look for some insight into the big questions, as well as talk about other questions you may have about this topic. Please join us.*

***R24: New Year's Resolutions for the Hospitable Church (full article provided)***

**New Year's Resolutions for the Hospitable Church**

Posted on December 29, 2011 by Judith Gotwald

As a people, Americans have become suspicious and xenophobic. We live in a world that recommends background checks and fosters credit checks for simplest of reasons. These attitudes are bound to manifest in church life.

But church life should be different. We should be welcoming the people with spotty backgrounds. Christ died for them! The least we can do is welcome them into His church!

Most churches describe themselves as friendly. Some church web sites describe themselves as “truly friendly.” Many churches post a generic sign “All Welcome.”

Friendliness, however, is a beauty that can only be measured by the eye of the beholder. If visitors to your church leave feeling they were wallflowers, observers of friendliness, it is not hospitality.

Redeemer Ambassadors visited 38 churches in the last 18 months. We have experience as recipients of church hospitality. We think this is an area of church life that needs to be addressed.

Hospitality, once part of the fabric of American life, no longer seems to come naturally. It may have to be taught and nurtured. Even pastors, whom we presume received training in evangelism, seem to be awkward in greeting church visitors.

Some churches have assigned “greeters.” But the gauntlet of greeters characteristically do little more than hand you a bulletin. We suspect that visitors are rare in some congregations and that leads to a bit of rustiness.

In several of the churches we visited, the pastor disappeared after the service and did not greet people at the door. At times the pastor was present in the fellowship area but stood along the wall and waited for people to come to him/her.

While some pastors pointed us to guest books to sign, most never introduced themselves to us or asked our names. After 38 visits, only one pastor followed up with a phone call after our visit. Another returned a call when one of our ambassadors called him.

Some churches seemed to have fellowship going on somewhere else in the building. The congregation disappeared quickly after worship, failing to invite us to join. In many cases, people walked by in the narthex and never made eye contact. In one instance, when we approached them and asked a simple question such as the location of a restroom, they responded, “Oh, we thought you knew someone here” or “We thought you were here for the baptism.” Assumptions block hospitality.

The number of churches/pastors who exhibited true hospitality are so few as to be memorable to us. We suspect that if others were greeted the way we were in these churches that they would return. Here are a few efforts we remember and appreciated as visitors:

- When a pastor personally invited us to fellowship, accompanied us and introduced us to a few people (one church visit).
- When a pastor asked if he could meet with us sometime during the week (one church visit).
- When a member took the time to give us a tour of their church and told us something of their history (three church visits).
- When a lay member sent us a handwritten thank you note for our visit (one church visit).
- When a member sat next to us and pointed things out in the bulletin (one church visit).
- When we left knowing at least one member’s name (a few times).
- When members of a church offered to help us (more than just pray) and followed through (three church visits).
- When a member engaged us in extensive conversation that was about us as much as about them (six visits).
- When congregation members prompted the worship leader to introduce visitors (two visits).
- When a pastor asked us to join their congregation (one church visit).

Here are four easy resolutions your church can make in 2012 to become a more welcoming, hospitable church:

- Make sure each visitor knows the name of at least one church member before they leave.
- Make sure each visitor is addressed by name before they leave.

- Make sure each visitor receives a direct and specific invitation to a church activity. It can be next week's worship or some other event. Most people report that they became involved in a congregation because someone invited them!
- Contact your visitor within five days of their visit with a phone call or greeting card. Make it as personal as possible.

DRAFT