

# MISSION STUDY - 1997

Webster Presbyterian Church

## INTRODUCTION

Churches, like people, live by their daily and weekly routines and tend to mark time's passage with monthly and annual events, which also can become routine occasions. For most of us, this is how life is lived. However, there are moments in our lives when change appears, bidden or unbidden, and we recognize that it is an opportunity to examine our familiar pathways - are they serving us well or is there a better way?

The goal of this present study is to examine our church - its identity, its programs, and the community it serves - and explore possible alternative ways for us to meet the opportunities and challenges of the coming century

We are presently searching for our next senior minister; this document should help explain us. We were at a similar but more difficult watershed in 1986.

- † We had just lost our minister of the past 17 years;
- † Challenger exploded in January, forcing NASA and our local economy into an entirely different future than any of us could have foretold; and
- † petroleum suddenly lost 80% of its value and its position as the dominant economic driver for Houston and the state.

These events called for a reevaluation of ourselves. This current study has used the 1986 study as a milepost to point out the differences that have taken place in the past ten years.

Most of this report is based on interviews, examination of church records, and various surveys of the congregation and the community. Where we have drawn conclusions, they are printed in *italics*; where we have offered recommendations, they are printed in **bold face**. Conclusions and recommendations are also collected at the front, where they cannot be avoided.

We have tried to let the data speak for itself in graphs and pictures, thus hoping to keep reading time to a minimum for our audience - Session, staff, and congregation members. We have had very willing cooperation from everyone we've asked to help. Some who have been particularly helpful are Kim Hart, Kim Zrubek, Kathie Wiley; and Karen Henry; thank you.

### The Mission Study Group

DeWitte Holland

Pat Koester

Bev Koos

Rogge Marsh

Charles Ward

# Table of Contents

	Page
MISSION STUDY - 1997.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS.....	3
WHO WE ARE.....	6
Our Heritage: The four ages of Webster Presbyterian.....	7
Membership: rolls and attendance.....	11
New Members.....	12
What we Believe.....	12
Where we Live.....	13
Our Ages.....	14
Our families.....	15
Our Education.....	15
Our Jobs.....	16
Our Income.....	16
How we give our Money.....	17
How we give our Time.....	17
How we help in the Community.....	18
WHERE WE WORSHIP.....	19
Areas of Use.....	19
Intensity of usage.....	20
Impact of WPCCC.....	20
Potential future usage.....	21
Potential future property acquisitions.....	21
WHERE WE LIVE: THE BAY AREA COMMUNITY.....	21
How our community perceives us.....	21
Study of Bay Area Churches.....	22
The community issues WPC could help with.....	23
WHAT WE THINK OF WPC PROGRAM AREAS.....	23
Worship.....	24
Concern for Members.....	24
Christian Education.....	25
Mission and Service.....	26
Evangelism.....	26
Stewardship.....	27
Physical Property.....	27
Leadership.....	28
WHAT WE THINK ABOUT OUR CHURCH TODAY.....	28
What is Best about WPC.....	28
What we would Change.....	28
What should we do Differently.....	29

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### The whole church

#### CONCLUSION

*Webster Presbyterian Church is:*

- † *at its best as a friendly church with a viable mission in the community, and a first rate staff. (See page 29)*
- † *still firmly a church of traditional families. (See pages 11 & 15)*
- † *still largely a church of professionals, teachers and managers. (See page 16)*
- † *traditional, conservative, and probably near the center of the range of Presbyterian congregations in the United States today. (See page 12)*

### Membership

#### CONCLUSION

*The 1996 "official" number of 1107 members indicates that our numbers have grown almost 50% over the past ten years. This is an inflated number which arises from our failure to review the active member roll. Only those who died or have asked for a transfer or removal of their membership have been purged from the active roll. No members have been reclassified to inactive status since before 1986. As a result, our roll may include 300 or more people who should be regarded as inactive (See page 11).*

#### RECOMMENDATION

**Session should review the member rolls at least once every two years, placing members in either active or inactive status, based on attendance records and experience. A measure of a church's health is how effectively its message reaches the people of the community it serves. Membership statistics are good indicators of this; however, these numbers must be kept up to be useful. (See page 11)**

#### CONCLUSION

*Members are unaware of the present effort to contact members that have been inactive. (See page 11)*

#### RECOMMENDATION

**Session must continue and give a high priority to our inactive member contact program. Certainly the member who attends only occasionally must always be highly welcome. However, if we are to be able to judge our own effectiveness, we must know how many of our "active" members no longer consider WPC their church home. (See page 11)**

## CONCLUSION

*Almost half of our present members have been with us more than 10 years. However, the majority of our new members are on the young side of middle age, thus indicating the importance of new members in the renewal of the church. (See page 12) Yet half of the surveyed members either disagreed or were unaware that any effort is made to involve new members in the life and work of the church. (See page 25)*

## RECOMMENDATION

- † **Session must examine the process and the degree to which new members are integrated into the work of the church, and find ways to improve this important function. (See page 25)**
- † **Session committees must be made aware of members' responses on Time and Talent Survey and, when appropriate, employ those who volunteer. (See page 27)**

## Member Care

## CONCLUSION

*WPC cannot be considered a friendly church if our congregation thinks people are left out, that we fail to follow up on inactive members, and that fellowship, which is no more than Sunday morning coffee, is just OK? A church is a place for worship, but it is also an extended family which collectively cares for and nurtures its members. This means social nurture as well as spiritual nurture, especially in a community such as ours with its large, transient population. (See page 25)*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- † **Care for its members must become a central issue for Session. It must devise or revive programs that insure that no one is excluded, and that opportunities for church-wide fellowship occur on a regular basis. (See page 25)**
- † **We need to work on more adult fellowship, reviving ACE, and pay closer attention to new members, their needs and their integration into the life of our church. (See page 29)**

## Growth and Outreach

## CONCLUSION

*The survey questions and reactions on outreach indicate our diffidence regarding growth. Since our Sunday attendance is today where it was in 1986, we may have carried this diffidence too far. WPC seems to have only a minimal program of active outreach to potential new members. (See page 26)*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- † **WPC should examine both its feelings and its options concerning growth of the congregation. (See page 26)**

- † Session must develop better ways for tracking visitors. (See page 26)
- † There may be many non-church-going people in our community who are looking for a church with just the conservative, traditional attributes in a church that WPC represents. We should publicize ourselves for what we are. (See pages 13 & 26)

#### CONCLUSION

*Our survey of age distribution shows that the 1986 most populous age group of members (45-49 years) is still with us, though obviously 10 years older. However, a new group of members, 20 years younger, is coming along to take the older group's place. (See page 14)*

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**We must never lose sight of this key attribute of a living church, a sign that our church is effectively renewing itself. (See page 14)**

### Administration

#### CONCLUSION

*Because of inconsistencies in annual reporting, we were unable to construct average pledge data for the 1986-96 period. As with membership, financial reporting seems to be an important variable which could have significant impact on our future. (See page 17)*

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- † Attention should be paid to uniform, comprehensive reporting of these data. Data retention is also a fertile area for improvement. (See page 17)
- † Session should set financial goals, update them at least annually, and communicate these goals to the congregation. (See page 27)

### Child Care

#### CONCLUSION

*Church usage shows we have a significant mission in WPCCC of which we can be proud. It also points out the size of the commitment we have undertaken. (See page 20)*

#### RECOMMENDATION

**The integration of WPCCC into the life and management of our church needs much more evaluation, analysis and study. Our church and its Session must give our Child Care Center greater support, attention, and publicity among the congregation. We may wish to consider alternate means of managing WPCCC to reduce the heavy burden now being shouldered by the Child Care Committee. (See page 20)**

## Building & Grounds

### CONCLUSION

*The analysis of building usage shows non-use times that could be taken up by additional church or outside activities – especially Saturdays. Also, though the C.E. wing is heavily used, other building areas could be further employed. (See page 21)*

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- † **We should continue to look for opportunities to acquire the remaining properties on “our block.” (See page 21)**
- † **Individual comments clearly display need for more outside lighting. (See page 28)**

## Christian Education

### CONCLUSION

*Information from the Session Committee survey shows numerous and highly diverse C.E. programs for all ages. However, a number of members expressed regret that the ACE program appears to be languishing. (See page 25)*

## Mission & Service

### CONCLUSION

*WPC clearly prefers local mission. Many of our members are involved with Habitat for Humanity, ICM and many others. As a result, we may have neglected the Church’s global mission activities or de-emphasized them too much. (See page 26)*

## Long Range Planning

### CONCLUSION

*We can’t say if our members want to know if the church has long range plans or not, but it is clear that, if asked, few of us know of any plans. (See page 28)*

### RECOMMENDATION

**The church should have a public statement, if no more than a newsletter article published at least once a year, that summarizes our ideas or plans for the next five-years. (See page 28)**

## WHO WE ARE

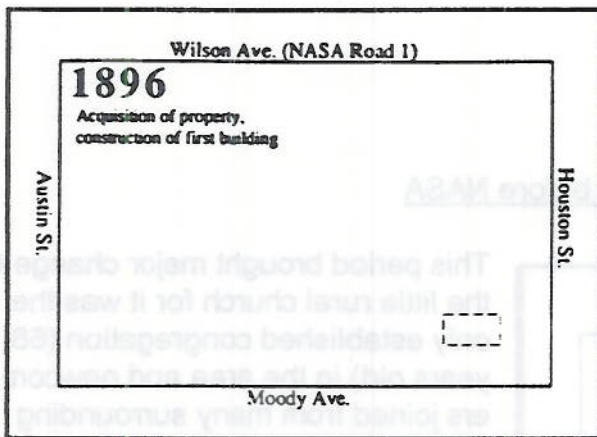
The first step in any organization’s self reevaluation is to be sure you know who it is that’s being studied. We have chosen to start with our history, our heritage.

## **OUR HERITAGE: THE FOUR AGES OF WEBSTER PRESBYTERIAN**

### 1893 to 1941: Persistence and an abiding faith

The first 48 years of the Webster Presbyterian Church congregation was a story of the congregation and its determination to provide God's word to the little Webster community. Supported by the Presbyterian Home Mission Board and led by pastors from several traditions (the Presbyterian pastor only preached when there was a fifth Sunday), the congregation continued even though nearby Methodist and Baptist churches failed. The little white church became the center of community activities.

- † 1893: Four men and 5 women meet after worship in the Webster school-house with the superintendent of Home Missions for the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. for the State of Texas. They write a charter and elect an elder.
- † 1895: Henry Bouton moves to Webster from Kansas and becomes a member. He would be our most active member until his death in 1954.

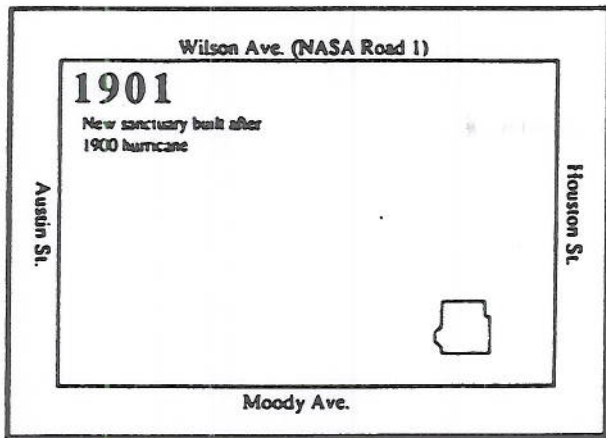


- † 1900: The same hurricane that wiped out Galveston destroys the first church building -- only the pulpit Bible remains. This Bible, which has been rebound, is located in one of the narthex niches of the 1983 sanctuary.

- † 1901: The church is rebuilt under the leadership of three experienced builders from the congregation.

- † 1902: Seito Saibara, future Webster community and church

leader, begins study at Hartford Theological Seminary and later decides to settle in the United States and develop an agricultural colony. In 1903 he purchased 304 acres of untilled prairie on a railway line in Webster for \$5750. Two friends purchased additional acreage. They brought a high yielding rice (known as Shinriki, or God Power rice) to Texas. The seed was sold to other Gulf Coast farmers.

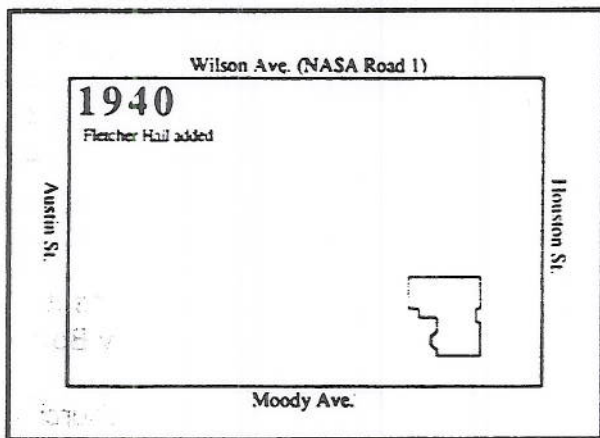


† 1907: The newly formed Houston Presbytery approves \$522. to support operating expenses for one year for the La Porte, Webster, and League City churches.

† 1912: Lightning strikes the church; the slender steeple is replaced with a more box-like structure.

† 1931: The Presbyterian Mission Board sends young Gertrude Seubold as director of religious education for three fledgling churches (Texas City, League City, and Webster). Webster is chosen for Mission Board support, and she would stay four years.

### 1942 to 1961: The war and the years before NASA

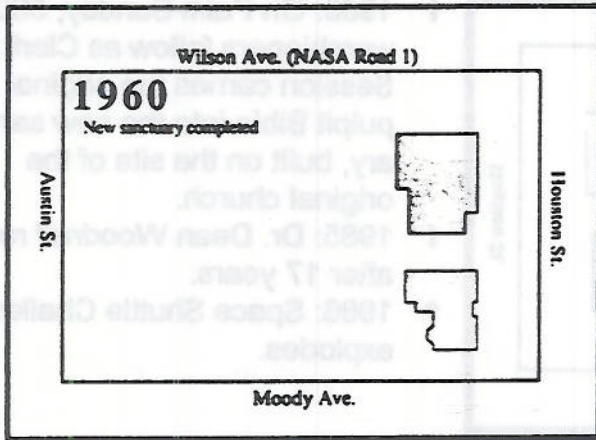


This period brought major change to the little rural church for it was the only established congregation (68 years old) in the area and newcomers joined from many surrounding communities. A larger sanctuary with stained glass windows had just been dedicated on Wilson Road (later NASA Road One) when engineers and astronauts came to Johnson Space Center.

† 1942: Shortly after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese rice farmers are interned for 3 weeks, then released to harvest rice for U.S. soldiers.

† 1949: Webster Community (Presbyterian) Church is adopted as the new name. The pastor leaves because of the church's severely limited finances.

† 1955: Paul Young is called to Webster as the first full-time pastor. The total church budget (including his salary) is \$7,427.64.

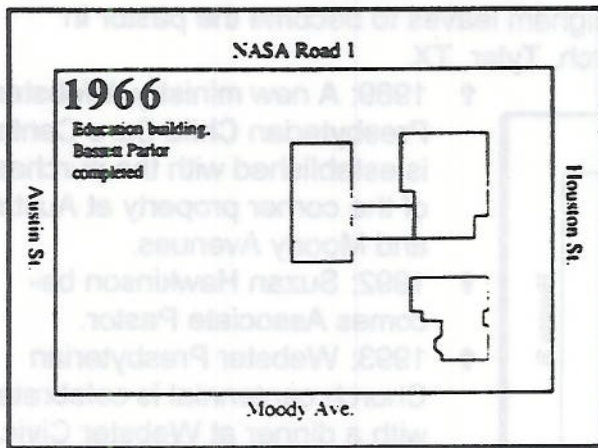


† 1960: The new brick sanctuary on Wilson Avenue (soon to be renamed NASA Road 1) is dedicated. Pastor Young leaves to start a church in Tyler.



1962 to 1986: Change, growth, and the space age

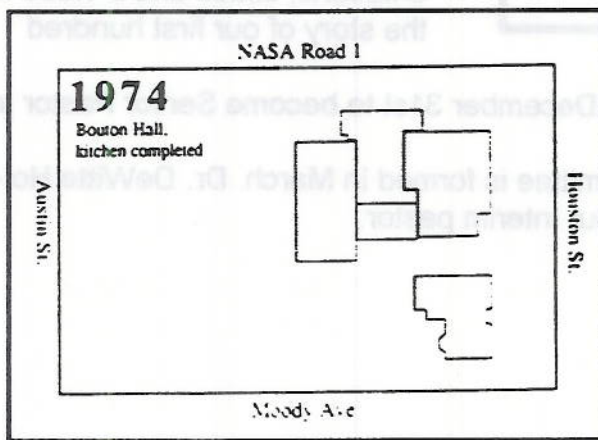
These 25 years brought unprecedented growth to our church in new members, buildings and real estate. The establishment of NASA as a neighbor two miles down the street at the Johnson Space Center completely transformed the church and the area. Once serving a quiet farming community, the church now filled with space program employees as well as teachers and petroleum industry personnel.



and the area. Once serving a quiet farming community, the church now filled with space program employees as well as teachers and petroleum industry personnel.

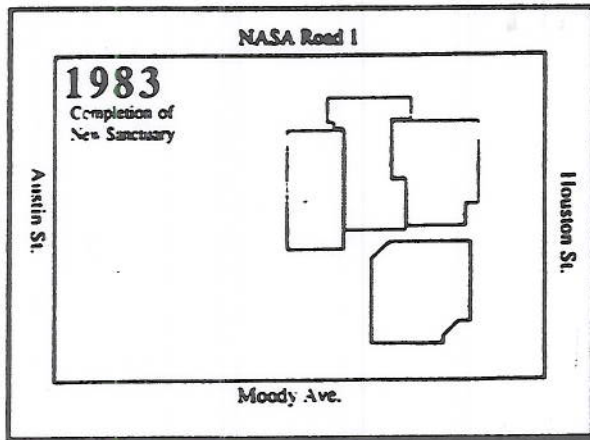
† 1966: The Education Wing and Bassett Parlor are dedicated.

† 1969: Elder Buzz Aldrin and the church celebrate the first Lunar Communion.



† 1974: The newly built meeting hall is named for Henry Bouton.

† 1977: The little white church is donated to Lunar Rendezvous Festival for use as a museum. In 1981, the building is moved in three pieces to Clear Lake Park to become the Bay Area Museum; the worship area is preserved with organ and pews.

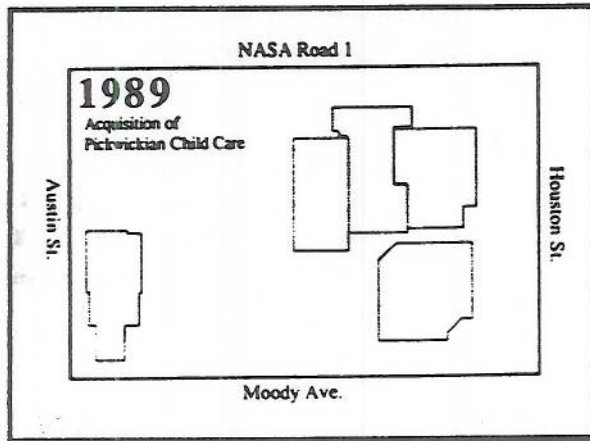


- † 1983: On Palm Sunday, 500+ worshippers follow as Clerk of Session carries the original pulpit Bible into the new sanctuary, built on the site of the original church.
- † 1985: Dr. Dean Woodruff retires after 17 years.
- † 1986: Space Shuttle Challenger explodes.

### 1987 to 1997: New ministries, new challenges

The congregation grows nearly 50% during this period. Members come from an ever-widening radius.

- † 1986: John Musgrave arrives at Christmas to become Senior Pastor.
- † 1987: Associate Pastor Jerry Whigham leaves to become the pastor in Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Tyler, TX.

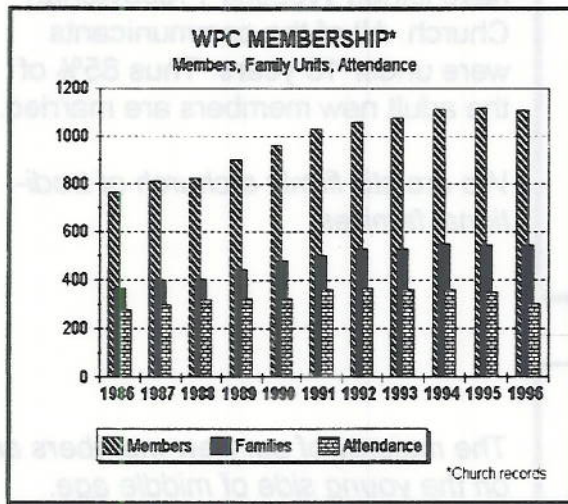


- † 1989: A new ministry, Webster Presbyterian Child Care Center, is established with the purchase of the corner property at Austin and Moody Avenues.
- † 1992: Suzan Hawkinson becomes Associate Pastor.
- † 1993: Webster Presbyterian Church centennial is celebrated with a dinner at Webster Civic Center for all. Historical presentations, slides and a video tell the story of our first hundred

years on NASA Road One.

- † 1995: John Musgrave leaves on December 31st to become Senior Pastor in Red Bank, NJ.
- † 1996: A Pastor Nominating Committee is formed in March. Dr. DeWitte Holland arrives in June to become our interim pastor.

## MEMBERSHIP: ROLLS AND ATTENDANCE



Church membership has grown significantly over the past ten years, though 1995 and 1996 are down from the peak year of 1994.

Attendance, however, has been flat since 1991, and, as might be expected with our Senior Pastor leaving in 1995, is down 15% in 1996 - from 360 to 304.

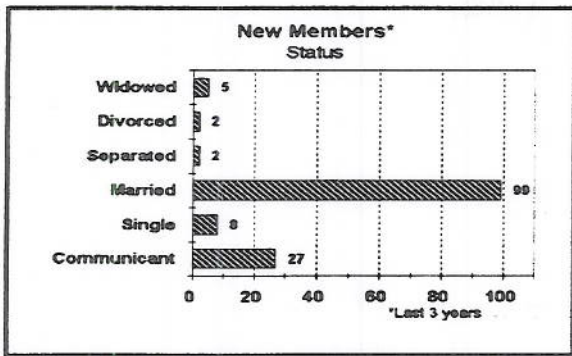
The 1996 "official" number of 1107 members indicates that our numbers have grown almost 50% over the past ten years. This is an inflated number which arises from our failure to review the active member roll. Only those who died or have asked for a transfer or removal of their membership have been purged from the active roll. No members have been reclassified to inactive status since before 1986. As a result, our roll may include 300 or more people who should be regarded as inactive.

Session should review the member rolls at least once every two years, placing members in either active or inactive status, based on attendance records and experience. A measure of a church's health is how effectively its message reaches the people of the community it serves. Membership statistics are good indicators of this; however, these numbers must be kept up to be useful.

Members are unaware of the present effort to contact members that have been inactive.

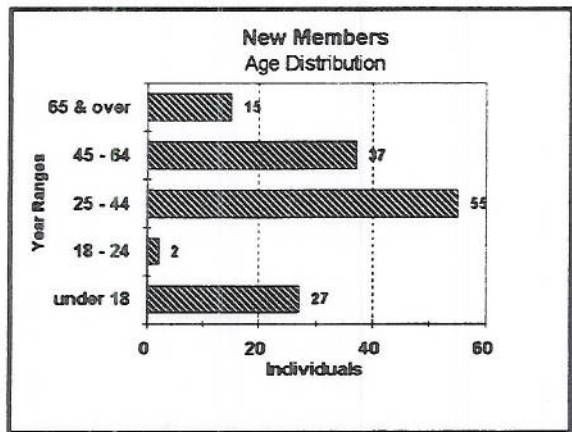
Session must continue and give a high priority to our inactive member contact program. Certainly the member who attends only occasionally must always be highly welcome. However, if we are to be able to judge our own effectiveness, we must know how many of our "active" members no longer consider WPC their church home.

## NEW MEMBERS



In the past three years, 143 people have joined Webster Presbyterian Church. All of the communicants were under 18 years. Thus 85% of the adult new members are married.

*We are still firmly a church of traditional families.*



*The majority of our new members are on the young side of middle age.*

*Church records indicate that 45% of our present members have been with us more than 10 years.*

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

A multiple choice survey was sent to a random selection of members to get some indication of what we believe theologically and why we joined the church. The responses we received are the basis for the following statements:

- † Faith is a life commitment to God that we demonstrate by trying to do what is right. Faith is trust in God's grace.
- † Our view of how God influences the things that happen in our world is that God influences individuals who then shape events. We don't know why terrible things occur in our world, but we do know that God is able to use them for good.
- † We believe that there is something after death, but have no idea what it may be like.
- † When we talk about the Bible, we feel that it is the inspired word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally.

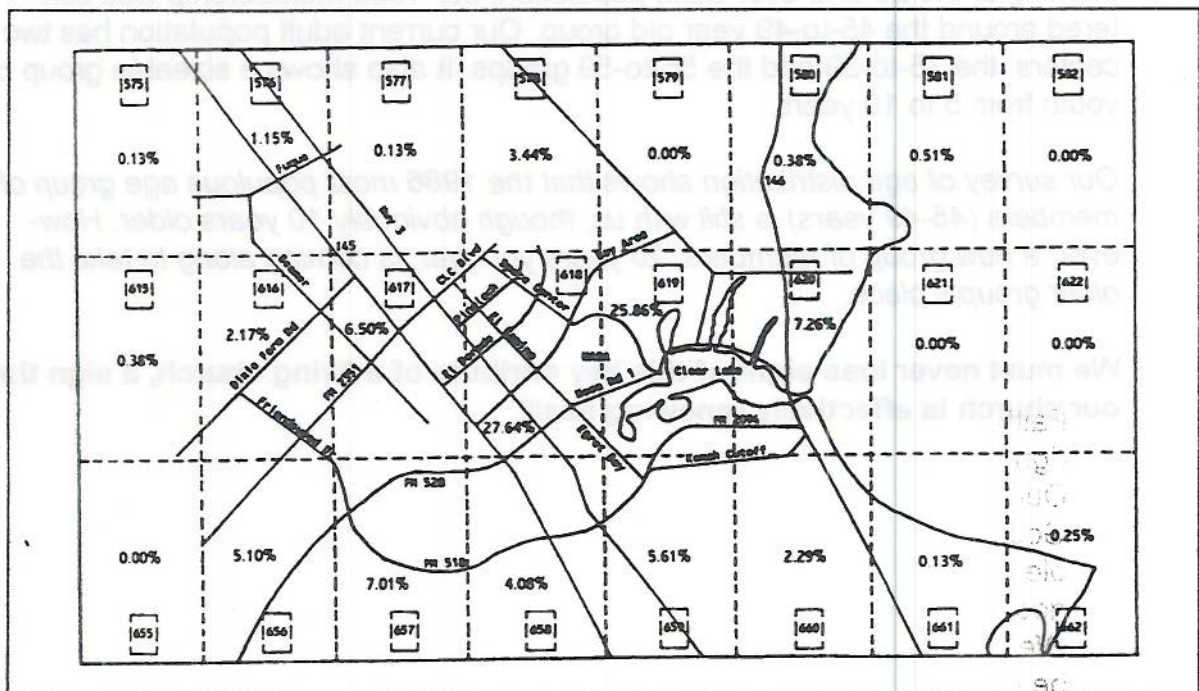
- † Christians sometimes describe God as a "God of justice;" we think of this at a more personal level. It means we should try to be fair and just in all our dealings.
- † We have mixed views concerning countries and people who do not know of Christ. Some of us desire to share the love of Christ with them; while others think we should respect their own religions and not impose ours upon them.
- † Why did we join WPC? Because we were made to feel welcome. The ministers were friendly and their sermons were of value.

*Our congregation is traditional, conservative, and probably near the center of the range of Presbyterian congregations in the United States today.*

**There may be many non-church-going people in our community who are looking for just this combination of attributes in a church. We should publicize ourselves for what we are.**

### **WHERE WE LIVE**

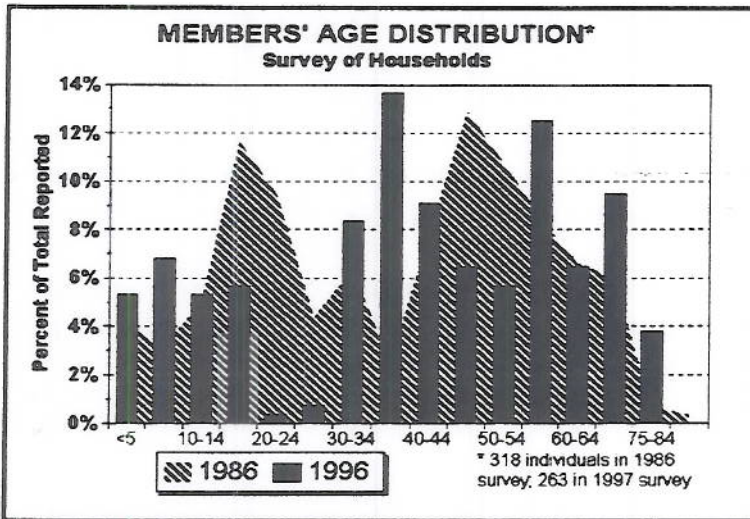
The town of Webster is a community of about 5300. However, 90% of our membership lives outside its city limits. We come from over ten communities within a ten-mile radius of the church, with a 1995 population of about 253,000.



The map shows the area divided by Key Map areas. The percentage of our members living in each division is also shown. Over half our members live Key Map segments 618 and 619, north and east of the church.

Though WPC is 98% white, the community is 77% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, 5% African American, and 7% Asian and other races.

## OUR AGES



Data for the ages of our members comes from a survey of households handed out to attendees at both worship services on two successive Sundays. Since the 112 responses - about 263 individuals - represent only a portion of our members, we have chosen to show all survey data as percentages of the total response. This

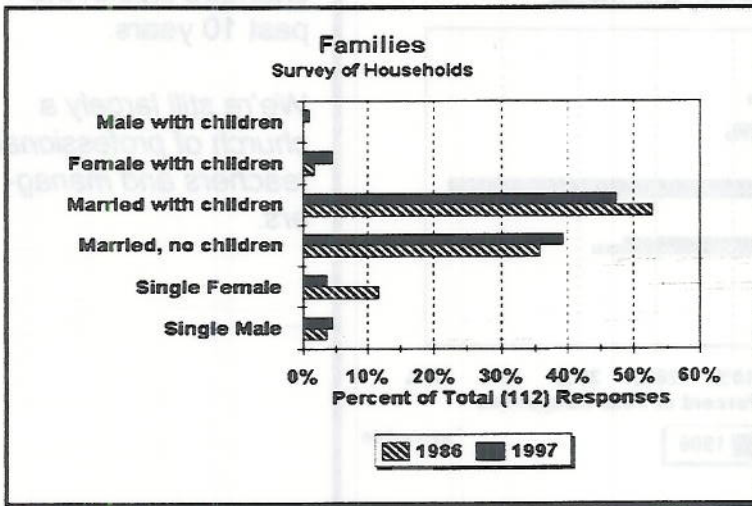
should be indicative of the membership as a whole. An identical survey, conducted in 1986, is shown for comparison.

Looking at the 25-and-over adult population, our 1986 membership was centered around the 45-to-49 year old group. Our current adult population has two centers: the 35-to-39 and the 55-to-59 groups. It also shows a sizeable group of youth from 5 to 19 years.

*Our survey of age distribution shows that the 1986 most populous age group of members (45-49 years) is still with us, though obviously 10 years older. However, a new group of members, 20 years younger, is coming along to take the older group's place.*

**We must never lose sight of this key attribute of a living church, a sign that our church is effectively renewing itself.**

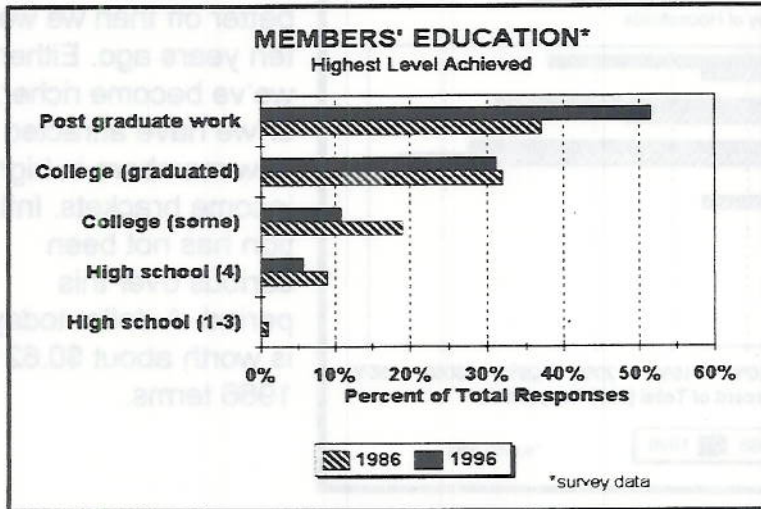
## OUR FAMILIES



As we saw with new members, over 85% of the congregation is married. There has been little change in our family mix over the past ten years, except that we have fewer single females.

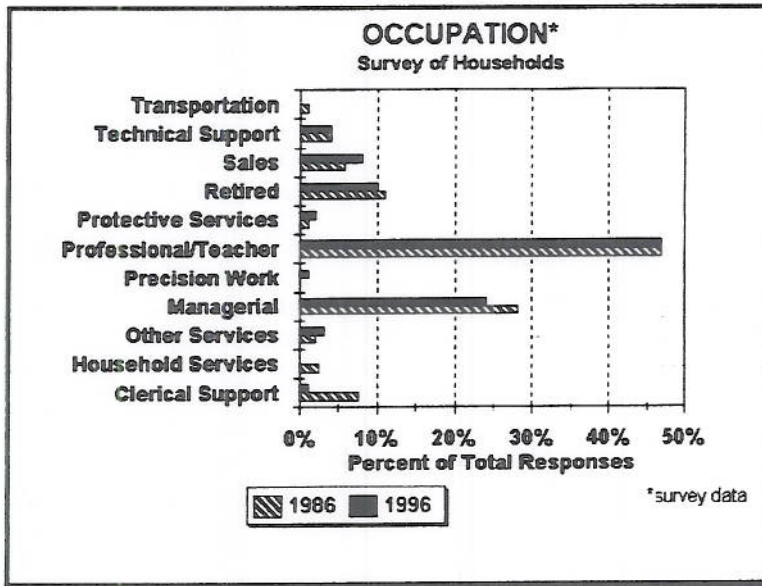
45% of us have been members for more than ten years.

## OUR EDUCATION



We are more educated than we were 10 years ago. Whether we are better educated or not remains to be seen.

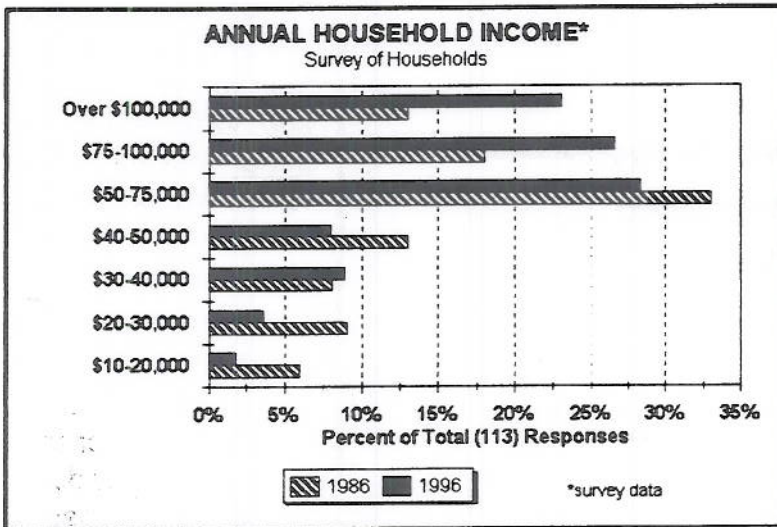
## OUR JOBS



Our job mix has changed little in the past 10 years.

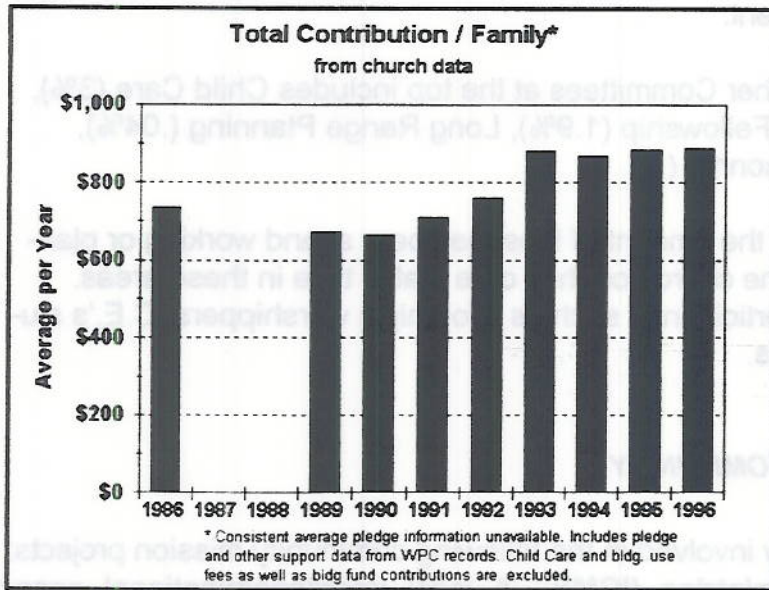
*We're still largely a church of professionals, teachers and managers.*

## OUR INCOME



Economically we are better off than we were ten years ago. Either we've become richer, or we have attracted new members in higher income brackets. Inflation has not been serious over this period. A dollar today is worth about \$0.82 in 1986 terms.

## HOW WE GIVE OUR MONEY



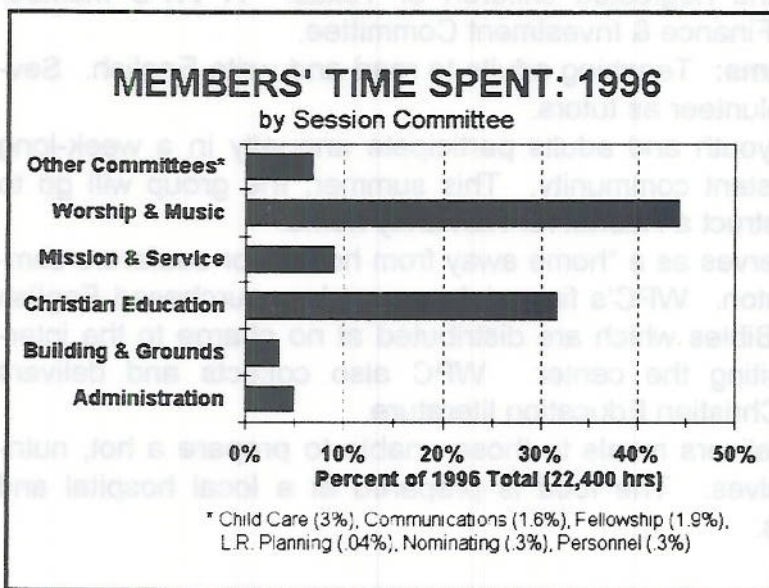
Determining how much money members contributed over the past ten years turned out to be more difficult than expected. Revenue information is missing for two years, and average pledge data is available only on a spotty basis.

Data in the graph does not include contributions made to building funds

*Because of inconsistencies in annual reporting, we were unable to construct average pledge data for the 1986-96 period. As with membership, financial reporting seems to be an important variable which could have significant impact on our future.*

Attention should be paid to uniform, comprehensive reporting of these data. Data retention is also a fertile area for improvement.

## HOW WE GIVE OUR TIME



Each Session committee was asked to help answer the question, "How much of our time do we spend working for the church, and how do we spend it?" For most committees, this is a very difficult judgment to make; we don't think in these terms. We simply do what is needed. Some committees, such as Worship and Music have regular music-oriented groups that don't vary much from

year to year and meet on a regular basis. Many of the other committees meet as needed, some quite informally, and may have very few members. Thus it is difficult to judge their time spent.

The graph bar labeled Other Committees at the top includes Child Care (3%), Communications (1.6%), Fellowship (1.9%), Long Range Planning (.04%), Nominating (.3), and Personnel (.3).

These values reflect only the amount of time members spend working or planning and do not include the church or child care staff's time in these areas. Neither does it include participants, such as Worship's worshippers, C.E.'s students, or Child Care's kids.

### ***HOW WE HELP IN THE COMMUNITY***

Our members are actively involved in the following community mission projects:

- † **Interfaith Caring Ministries (ICM):** A local interdenominational agency which provides emergency assistance to the needy in the area. Our congregation provides food, money, and many volunteers.
- † **ICM Resale Shop:** Provides low-cost items for the needy with profits benefiting ICM's client services. The shop is located on our church property. Volunteers sort, price, and sell the goods.
- † **Habitat for Humanity:** Builds homes for God's people in need by forming partnerships between the needy and those who are more affluent. Our church sponsored half of a house in 1995 and provides a regular work team every four to six weeks. Several members of the congregation serve as board members or officers.
- † **Presbyterian Children's Homes:** Serves the ever-changing needs of abused, abandoned and neglected children of Texas. A WPC member serves as Chair of the Finance & Investment Committee.
- † **Adult Literacy Programs:** Teaching adults to read and write English. Several of our members volunteer as tutors.
- † **Mission Trip:** WPC youth and adults participate annually in a week-long service project in a distant community. This summer, the group will go to Pensacola to help construct a Habitat for Humanity home.
- † **Seafarers' Center:** Serves as a "home away from home" for seafarers coming to the port of Houston. WPC's financial support has purchased English and foreign language Bibles which are distributed at no charge to the international seafarers visiting the center. WPC also collects and delivers magazines and some Christian Education literature.
- † **Meals on Wheels:** Delivers meals to those unable to prepare a hot, nutritious meal for themselves. The food is prepared at a local hospital and delivered by volunteers.

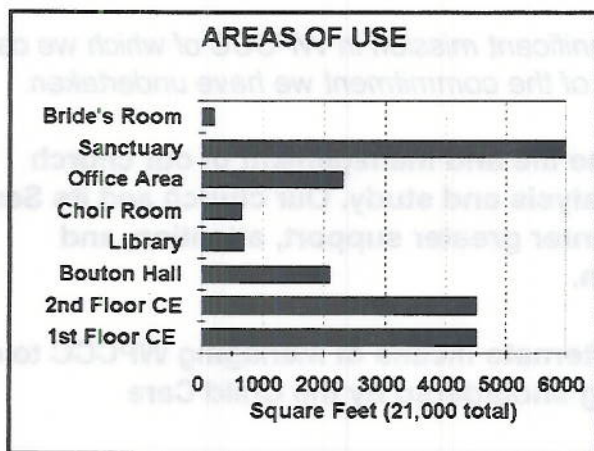
- † **The Turning Point:** Provides shelter for battered women and children. WPC is funding the furniture for one of the bedrooms in a newly constructed home. In addition, the congregation held a "shelter shower" for needed items.
- † **CROP Walk:** Raises money to combat hunger. Members of the congregation participate in the walk-a-thon and are sponsored by non-walking members.
- † **McWhirter Elementary School:** Church members serve as volunteers at this school which is only one block from the church.
- † **Presbytery:** Our members work for various boards and activities, such as Camp Cho Yeh, Presbyterian Women, the Hunger Team and New Church Development.

## WHERE WE WORSHIP

The church property is contained on 1.90 acres of land which includes all buildings, grounds, and parking for about 125 cars.

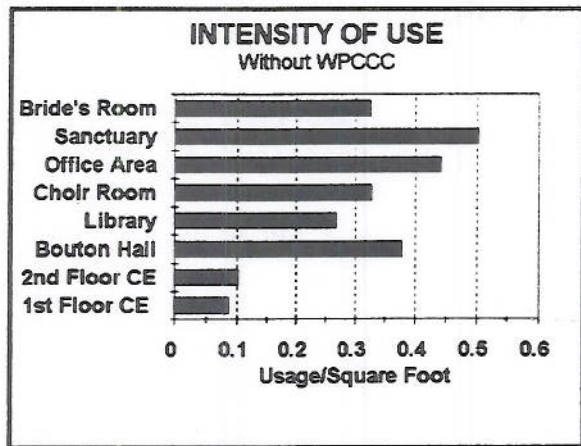
- † Sanctuary, completed in 1983 to replace one that had served the church since 1960.
- † Christian Education wing, two-story' contains classrooms for the Webster Presbyterian Child Care Center during the week
- † Main building which contains a large meeting hall and kitchen, library, choir room, and the administrative offices
- † Outreach Building which contains a resale shop for Interfaith Caring Ministries, a local ecumenical mission
- † Property next to C.E. wing on NASA Road 1, one of the three remaining properties on the church's block; purchased in November, 1995

### AREAS OF USE



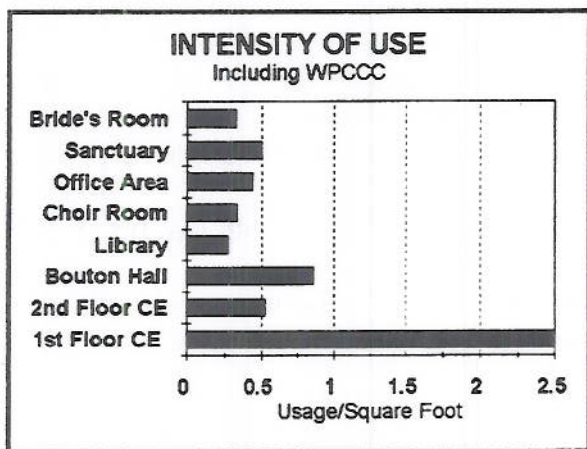
These are the areas of the church which we maintain for the ministry and mission of the church. This does not include our Outreach Building which is devoted to ICM's resale shop. Nor is Child Care's playground included.

## ***INTENSITY OF USAGE***



We have estimated the usage of each of these areas based on examinations of the church schedule, newsletter information, and direct inquiry. This usage, in person hours per month, counts all users, whether they are staff, members, or users from outside the church. This total usage is then divided by the square footage of the area to yield this Intensity of Use chart.

## ***IMPACT OF WPCCC***



The Child Care Center in March, 1997, included 12 full time and 5 part time care givers, 3 salaried staff and 95 children. Counting these users for five days each week substantially increases the usage of WPC's facilities. Playground usage is not included.

*Church usage shows we have a significant mission in WPCCC of which we can be proud. It also points out the size of the commitment we have undertaken.*

**The integration of WPCCC into the life and management of our church needs much more evaluation, analysis and study. Our church and its Session must give our Child Care Center greater support, attention, and publicity among the congregation.**

**We may also wish to consider alternate means of managing WPCCC to reduce the heavy burden now being shouldered by the Child Care Committee.**

## **POTENTIAL FUTURE USAGE**

*The analysis of building usage pointed out non-use times that could be taken up by additional church or outside activities – especially Saturdays. Also, though the C.E. wing is heavily used, other of our building areas could be further employed.*

## **POTENTIAL FUTURE PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS**

**We should continue to look for opportunities to acquire the remaining properties on “our block.”**

## **WHERE WE LIVE: THE BAY AREA COMMUNITY**

Webster is a suburban community of about 5,300; our congregation, however, serves several suburban communities in an area within a 10-mile radius of the church. In fact, over 90% of the congregation live outside the city of Webster and 10% come from the Houston and Galveston areas.

More than 156,000 residents of nine separate municipalities enjoy the unique lifestyle in what is referred to as the “Clear Lake Area.” This area consists of Friendswood, Webster, Clear Lake Shores, El Lago, Kemah, League City, Nassau Bay, Seabrook, and Taylor Lake Village.

The aerospace industry provides a major economic impact on the Clear Lake Area. NASA Johnson Space Center provides a continued economic stimulus and almost every major aerospace company is represented in this area, as well as the \$68 million facility of Space Center Houston. The petrochemical industry is another major part of Clear Lake’s economic foundation with the largest petrochemical activity in the nation.

A survey for the Clear Creek school district as well as another projection by UHCLC suggested growth of this area of between 3 and 4 percent over the next ten years.

## **HOW OUR COMMUNITY PERCEIVES US**

- † Facilities open for use by community, but seem under-utilized at present

## STUDY OF BAY AREA CHURCHES

Our survey of a wide variety of local churches showed only good will toward other churches. This suggests that churches are promoting good in the broad sense, rather than a denomination's own particular brand of good. We asked the churches to give us information on their church and, particularly, how they conduct certain important activities of the church.

### About the churches:

- † All reported getting either modestly or substantially larger, owing largely to new residents.
- † Some have multiple services, some being "alternative", and a few reported attendance numbers equal to 60-100% of membership.

### Attracting new members:

- † Activities aimed at apartment dwellers, such as recreation for children or activities teaching parenting skills.
- † Loaves of bread and invitations to worship.
- † In worship service, either as an altar call ( Methodist, Baptist) or an opportunity to meet with the pastor after the service.
- † Community activities such as dinners, carnivals, sales
- † Some use direct mail to newcomers, and some have their own Web site on the Internet
- † Word-of-mouth still the most employed and most successful at bringing in new members.

### Membership training for adults:

- † Classes ranging from 2 to 12 hours
- † None in some cases of altar calls

### Bringing new members into the life of the church:

- † Most have no specific expectations or means
- † One reported specific courses of study

### Promoting fellowship/community in church:

- † Learning groups and various training activities
- † No church-wide fellowship activities reported

### Spiritual development outside worship:

- † Predominantly Bible study, usually with structured curriculum
- † Committing to annual tasks
- † Leadership training

- † Assisted meditation
- † Retreats with guided program

Working with other churches:

- † No formal means now exist
- † Should cooperate at community-wide ceremonial occasions, such as World Communion Sunday, Thanksgiving

Outreach programs beyond congregation:

- † Habitat for Humanity, Interfaith Caring Ministry, etc.
- † Halloween Ghost Busters Program of Grace Church

Favorite and most successful outreach

- † The gospel
- † Dynamic worship
- † Word of mouth
- † Breakfast with the Rector

***THE COMMUNITY ISSUES WPC COULD HELP WITH***

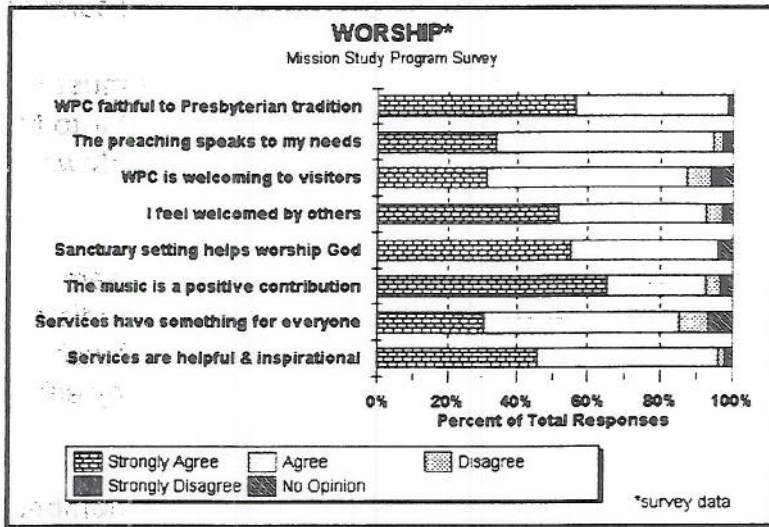
The same interviews yielded this list of community issues:

- † Promotion of senior programs and assisted living facilities
- † Family stress, related to working parents (or single parent) in a generally non-supportive employment environment
- † The identity and support problems of a largely transient population without a strong sense of community
- † Moral, character, and spiritual training for children and youth in economically stressed households with minimal parental support
- † The special spiritual needs of women seeking to balance career and home/parental responsibilities

**WHAT WE THINK OF WPC PROGRAM AREAS**

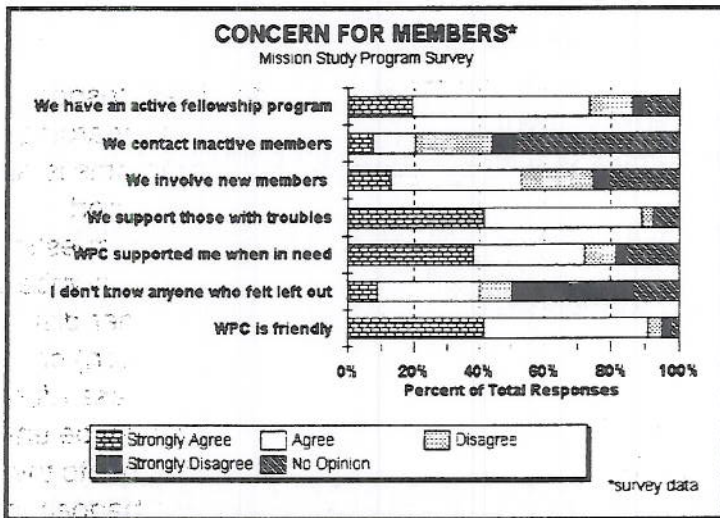
The following section is the result of a survey of our membership done in February of this year. We received 242 responses from individuals reflecting their opinions on 45 questions covering eight program areas.

## WORSHIP



As one would expect from people that fill out a form during worship service, these results indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the way we worship God.

## CONCERN FOR MEMBERS



Regarding how well we look after our members, a significant number appear to know of people who feel left out of our church family. Agreement that we have an active fellowship program was less than enthusiastic. These responses seem at variance with the response at the bottom of the chart, and corroborated elsewhere, that says we are a friendly

church. Only 20% agreed that we contact inactive members. Judging from the condition of our rolls, it looks as though they were wrong; we don't - at least not until recently. The responses to these questions is quite unsettling for a church widely acknowledged to be "friendly." A friendly church should have a rousing fellowship program, new members should be warmly embraced, and the return of inactive members should be aggressively sought.

*WPC cannot be considered a friendly church if our congregation thinks people are left out, that we fail to follow up on inactive members, and that fellowship, which means no more than Sunday morning coffee, is just OK? A church is a*

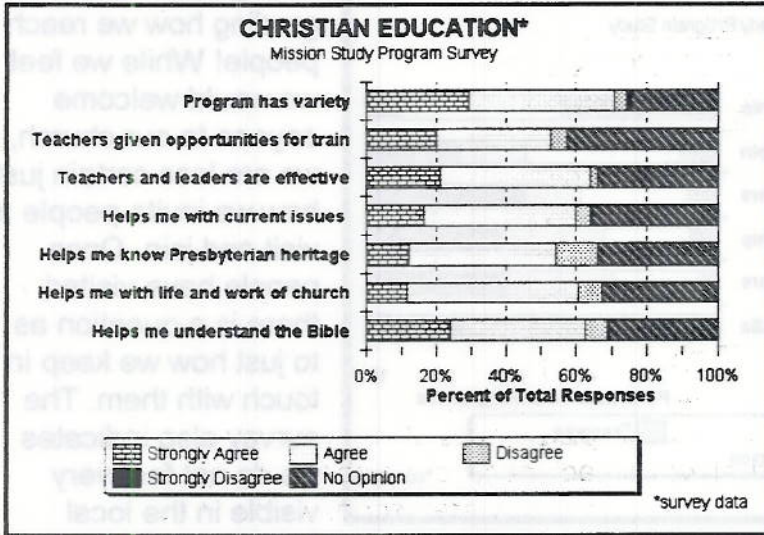
place for worship, but it is also an extended family which collectively cares for and nurtures its members. This means social nurture as well as spiritual guidance, especially in a community such as ours with its large, transient population.

Care for its members must become a central issue for Session. It must devise or revive programs that insure that new members are brought into the church's life, that no one is excluded, and that opportunities for fellowship occur on a regular basis.

Almost half of our present members have been with us more than 10 years. However, the majority of our new members are on the young side of middle age, thus indicating the importance of new members in the renewal of the church. Yet half of the surveyed members either disagreed or were unaware that any effort is made to involve new members in the life and work of the church.

Session must examine the process and the degree to which new members are integrated into the work of the church, and find ways to improve this important function.

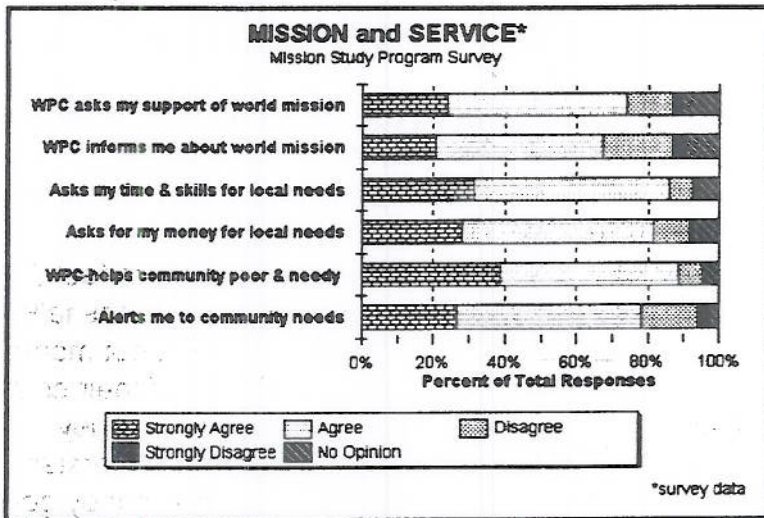
### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



The dominant response by members regarding our C.E. programs is approval and support. However, each question has substantial numbers expressing either disinterest (no opinion) or lack of awareness (don't know). This may be entirely attributable to the survey being handed to worshippers and not to C.E. participants.

Information from the Session Committee survey shows numerous and highly diverse C.E. programs for all ages. However, a number of members expressed regret that the ACE program appears to be languishing.

## MISSION AND SERVICE

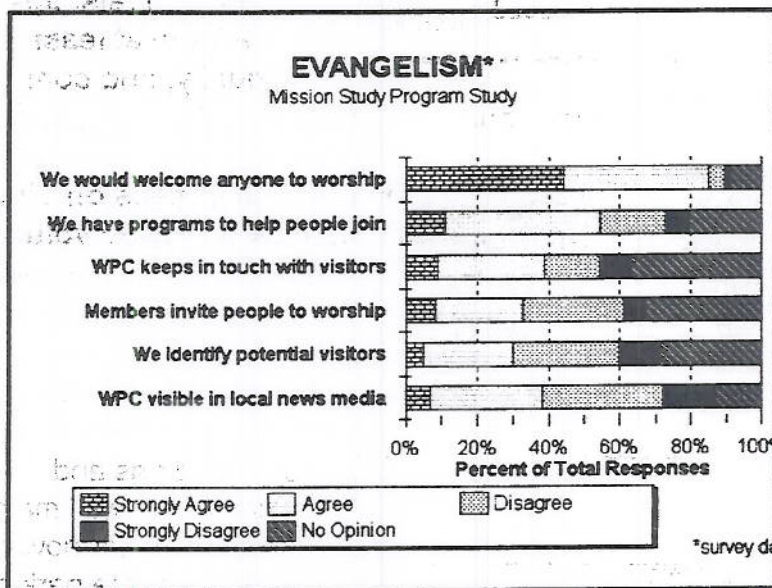


Almost everyone felt well informed on WPC's local mission activities. WPC has historically been more interested in local mission that can be seen and touched. See "How we give our time."

WPC clearly prefers local mission. Many of our members are involved with Habitat for Human-

ity, ICM and many others. As a result, we may have neglected The Church's global mission activities or de-emphasized them too much.

## EVANGELISM



This is an area of strong sentiment regarding how we reach people! While we feel we would welcome anyone to our church, we are less certain just how we invite people to visit and join. Once people have visited, there is a question as to just how we keep in touch with them. The survey also indicates we do not feel very visible in the local

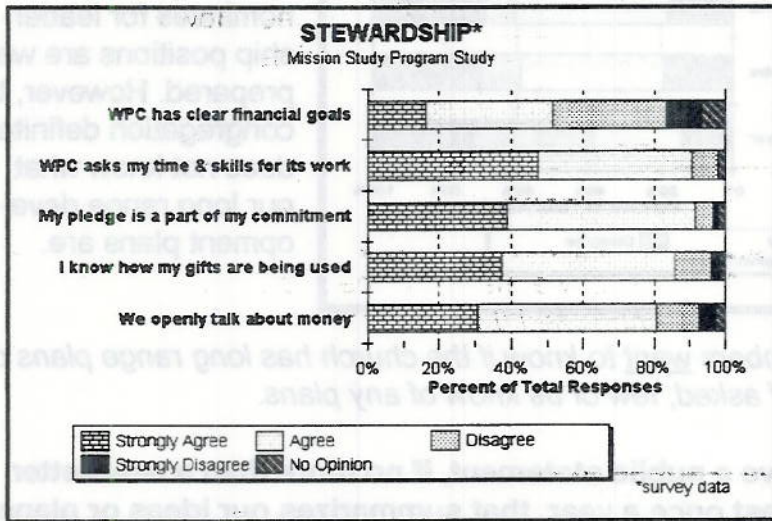
news media.

The survey questions and reactions on outreach indicate our diffidence regarding growth: Since our attendance is today where it was in 1986, we may have carried this diffidence too far. WPC seems to have only a minimal program of active outreach to potential new members.

WPC should examine both its feelings and its options concerning growth of the congregation.

Session must develop better ways for tracking visitors.

### STEWARDSHIP

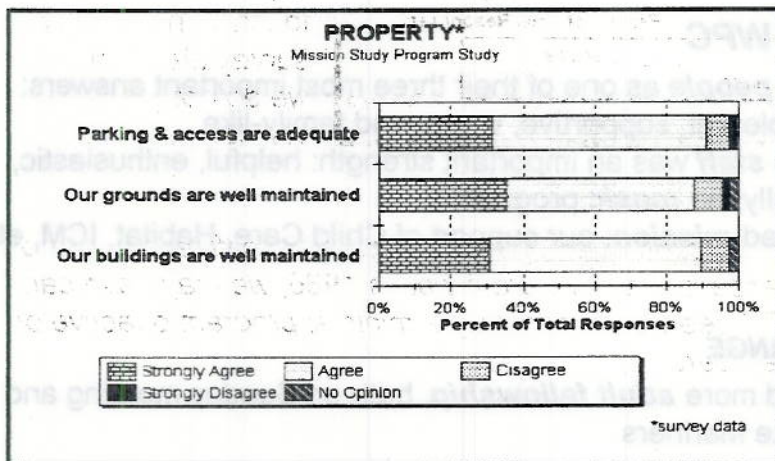


Our members feel that the church does talk candidly about money as a part of their commitment, and they appear to understand where the money goes. However, members are also not at all clear on our financial goals.

Session should set financial goals, update them at least annually, and communicate these goals to the congregation.

Session committees must be made aware of members' responses on Time and Talent Survey, and, when appropriate, must employ those who volunteer.

### PHYSICAL PROPERTY

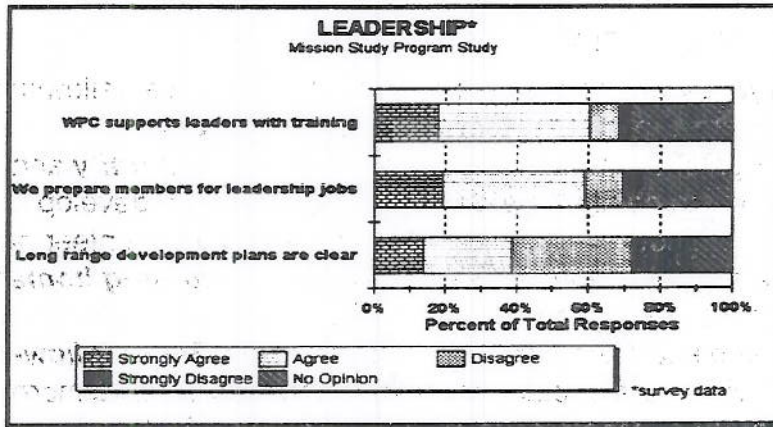


Our buildings and grounds are well maintained, and, for now, we have adequate parking.

The survey ignored exterior lighting; there were numerous write-in comments on the need for more lighting, especially in the lot across the street

Individual comments clearly display need for more outside lighting.

## LEADERSHIP



Members think our leaders are being supported and that nominees for leadership positions are well prepared. However, the congregation definitely does not know what our long range development plans are.

We can't say if our members want to know if the church has long range plans or not, but it is clear that, if asked, few of us know of any plans.

The church should have a public statement, if no more than a newsletter article published at least once a year, that summarizes our ideas or plans for a five-year future period.

## WHAT WE THINK ABOUT OUR CHURCH TODAY

Our final survey of the membership was a Saturday morning breakfast session called "Our Church, Our Vision" to solicit opinion from five groups of attendees on three questions.

### WHAT IS BEST ABOUT WPC

- † All five groups listed **people** as one of their three most important answers: words like friendly, tolerant, supportive, warm, and family-like.
- † Four groups said the **staff** was an important strength: helpful, enthusiastic, competent – especially the **music** program
- † Four groups also listed **mission**: our support of Child Care, Habitat, ICM, etc.

### WHAT WE WOULD CHANGE

- † Three groups wanted more **adult fellowship**, both on Sunday morning and with social groups like Mariners

- † Three groups felt we should revive the languishing **ACE** program
- † Four groups called for encouraging people's **involvement**, especially **new members** and **young adults**.
- † Others mentioned changes to **stewardship, facilities, training, etc.**

### **WHAT SHOULD WE DO DIFFERENTLY**

- † Appeal to **young adults** by having contemporary worship service, fellowship on weekend evenings, etc.; Involve and engage **new members**
- † Expand Wednesday nights to include community; open to **community** and expand programs. Look into needs for **elderly** in community and develop program (e.g., Adopt a Grandparent) Increased involvement in volunteer outreach programs. Greater connection between WPCCC and **nursing homes**. Revive **ACE** with more interesting topics
- † Create a priority for people to attend worship and programs. Better **follow-up** on **Time & Talent**. involve more people; bring in all volunteers; Have more small groups. Improve **appearance** of facilities frontage on NASA 1
- † Form or join consortium of churches for disaster assistance.
- † Reevaluate and change approach for **Stewardship Campaign**
- † Have representative of local agency (e.g., United Way) speak to C.E. or church on community needs. Increase membership's **awareness** of WPC's local mission activities. Endow more **scholarships for WPCCC**. Adult mission trips

*WPC is at its best as a friendly church with a viable mission in the community, and a first rate staff.*

**We need to work on more adult fellowship, reviving ACE, and pay closer attention to new members, their needs and their integration into the life of our church.**