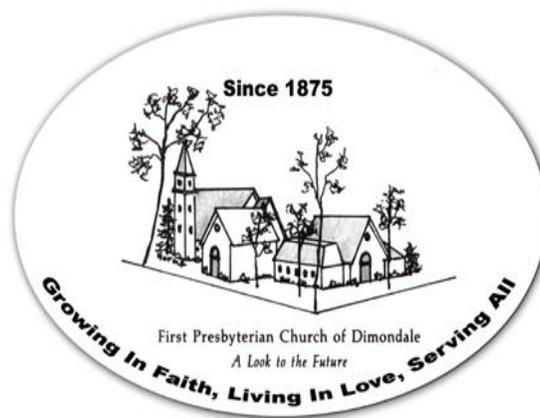


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## Mission Study

### First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale



January 6, 2004

#### ***Prepared By***

*Mission Study Team*

*A. David Mix (Moderator)*

*Michelle Bofysil, Jill Brown-Figg, Christine L. Larson,  
Philip Moody, Jerry Van Liew, Susan York*

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

*"He has told you, O Mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."*

*Micah 6:8*

### **A. Why A Mission Study?**

The Presbyterian Church USA requires that a church undertake a Mission Study when a pastor leaves and before a new pastor is called. In April of 2003 the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale appointed a Mission Study Team and charged it with the task of preparing a mission study report in preparation for the calling of a new pastor. The goals of the Mission Study were to review and update the church's mission statement, to look at the church's programs and processes critically to determine if they were consistent with the church's mission and vision and effective in reaching their goals, to chart a direction for the long term and to provide a profile of the church in the short term to support of the work of a Pastor Nominating Committee.

Session chose the following people to be on the Mission Study Team: A. David Mix, (Elder and Moderator), Michelle Bofysil, Jill Brown-Figg, Christine Larson, Philip Moody, Jerry Van Liew, and Susan York.

Pastor John Folkers worked with the team in an advisory capacity throughout the process. We thank him for his effort and concern.

### **B. The Mission Study Process**

The team sought input from the congregation and the community in all aspects of the study. The interviews and surveys were directed towards recommending actions for change and growth by answering the following questions:

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|------------------|---|
| <b>Calling:</b>  | <b>What is our mission and vision?</b>  |
| <b>Identity:</b> | <b>Who are we as a church?</b>  |
| <b>Context:</b>  | <b>What is the physical and social context for the church?</b>                        |
| <b>Programs:</b> | <b>What are our programs and are they effective in accomplishing our mission?</b>     |
| <b>Process:</b>  | <b>How do we go about handling our work and are our processes true to our vision?</b> |

The first meeting of the Mission Study Team was held on June 1, 2003. The committee used the "Congregational Mission Studies Notebook" as a guide to help us learn about who we are as a congregation and what God has called our church to do. The Mission Study Team engaged the congregation in that task in the following ways:

1. An invitational letter was mailed to 139 congregational members inviting all to attend a small group meeting to discover our biblical calling. Small group meetings involving the participation of 49 members and one non-member were held on three dates in early October for this purpose.
2. A Mission Study Congregational Survey was written and distributed in October to all members. A broad range of questions was asked regarding theology, community issues, program ministries and processes. Seventy-six surveys were returned, which represents 35% of our current membership.

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3. Throughout the study, information-gathering meetings were held with several small groups and individuals, which included Session, Ministry Team members and the Recycling Director.
  4. "Minute for Mission Study" updates were provided during worship services three or four times a month.
  5. An update of the Mission Study Team's activities and progress was included in each monthly newsletter and also on our web site during the time of the study
  6. A community survey was mailed to one/tenth of all Windsor Township and Dimondale residents. Thirty-two responses were received.
  7. The Mission Study Team commissioned a Natural Church Development Survey that was administered to 30 active members and the pastor. The quality characteristics identified in the Natural Church Development process are inspiring worship, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. Results of the survey provide a snapshot of a church's strengths and weaknesses in these quality characteristics that, taken together, suggest a church's potential for growth.

The Mission Study Team met three to four times a month between June and December to pray, plan, review, discuss, evaluate and summarize the collected information.

The Team has made a large number of recommendations, based on its prayerful review of the congregation's responses to the survey, discussions, other sources of data and internal discussions. In making these recommendations, the Mission Study Team does not imply other suggestions and concerns do not deserve serious consideration by the leadership of this congregation.

It is the Mission Study Team's hope the entire report will be used in years to come for guidance. The Mission Study Team proposes that a second Natural Church Development Survey be conducted in the future to assess the changes that have occurred in the church's profile and whether the church has been successful in addressing its needs.

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## **SECTION 2: BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL CALLING**

*"Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."*  
Ephesians 4:1b-6

At the beginning of this study, time was provided to explore and discuss biblical and historical imperatives. The first task of this Mission Study project was to remember our biblical and historical calling.

To complete this first task, small group meetings of the congregation and guests were held. Three small group meetings were held with forty-nine members and one non-member participating. At the meetings the participants were reminded of their roots, and expressed their assumptions about the life God has called us to live, and the work God has called us to do.

Meeting attendees were then divided into three discussion groups. Each group discussed our biblical and historical calling using the Bible, the Book Order, or the Book of Confessions, respectively, as reference materials.

The following questions provided the basis for the participants to remember their roots and express their assumptions.

- Why has God called the church together?
- What has God called the church to be?
- What has God called the church to do?
- What are the responsibilities and promise of the church's calling?

The statement below represents a summary of that work.

***We are a congregation of faithful believers who serve God by sharing His word, which God has made available to us through Jesus Christ, his son.***

***As disciples, we are called to worship, nurture, teach, lead, love, and use our gifts to serve and glorify God.***

***We are to love and serve God by worshiping Him, seeking out others with whom to share the good news, and caring for all.***

***By the grace of God, we are forgiven and granted eternal life***

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## SECTION 3: IDENTITY

### **A. History**

The First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale has a long and rich history. Community prayer groups began in Windsor Township, Michigan, in the late 1830s, and were ministered to by circuit riders. Later local Presbyterians began to gather for the Sabbath at various locations and finally, in 1875 purchased a church already under construction by Congregationalists. The church was named First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale and stood on our present site.

The early history of the church was described in an article in the church's centennial year directory and program published in 1975. What is most remarkable about that history to 1975 was the frequency of turnover in the pulpit. As a mission church, the church lacked money to pay a pastor and thus was supported by Presbytery for many years, with the effect that many of the first 39 pastors were either pastors shared with another church, lay pastors, or pastors of short duration.

The history of the church changed dramatically when John Toth became pastor in 1969, for Toth's ministry was to last for 33 years. That ministry marked a period of growth in membership, stabilization of finances, purchase of adjacent property, construction of a major addition, establishment of a recycling mission and center, a clear commitment to community involvement, and establishment of new programs and traditions that continue to this day. The history of the church during the ministry of Reverend Toth is included in this Mission Study Report as Appendix A.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1. First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale has a long, rich history of which to be proud. Our history should be acknowledged and celebrated annually with a special program of thanksgiving on Presbyterian Heritage Day, a Sunday designed on the Presbyterian calendar in late May (May 23, 2004) for this purpose. Special mention of our history should also be made on a Sunday closest to June 11, as this is the date of our church's official Presbyterian recognition.**

### **B. Theological Climate**

Questions about theological views were included in the Congregational Survey and responses were received from 76 of the 206 members.

A review of congregational survey results suggests that the majority of members have moderate views on important theological issues. Faith is seen as "a life of commitment to God that I demonstrate by trying to do what is right" (42%) and "belief in God and therefore in Jesus" (26%). God's role in the world is viewed by 36% as "God influences people who then shape events" and by 20% as "God influences individuals but also shapes events directly through nations and social affairs". In response to why God lets bad things happen, more than half (55%) said, "We don't know why these things happen but God is able to use them for good", while 21% said, "People cause things to happen, not God." Diverse views were expressed on the question of life after death. Thirty-nine percent said, "There must be something beyond death, but I have no idea what it may be like." Another 36% maintained there is life after death, with rewards for some and punishments for others. Only 7% doubted or rejected the idea of life after death. Sixteen percent (16%) claimed the Bible is to be taken literally while 56% felt the Bible is the inspired word of God with not everything in it to be taken literally. Another 20% felt that the Bible is an ancient book of moral precepts, history, legends, and fables recorded by men.

Attitudes toward people of other religions and beliefs were tolerant and respectful with only 6% saying that if we do not preach Christ to them, they will be damaged forever. Opinions were diverse on the

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concept of God as a god of justice. And almost 60% believe that it is possible to reconcile evolution with a belief in God and His power to shape the world.

The congregation is split on the issue of sexual orientation and the ministry, with 39% feeling that anyone with the appropriate background and training can be a minister while 42% believe gays should not be allowed in the ministry under any condition. Nineteen percent (19%) were neutral on this issue.

Finally, 66% would like the church to devote more attention to members' spiritual growth while only 10% feel spiritual growth is best left up to the individual. This question elicited one comment that "It's both—not either/or." The results of the Natural Church Development Survey showed that "passionate spirituality" received the second lowest score (Appendix B). Both the congregational views on spiritual growth reflected in the congregational survey and the Natural Church Development Survey results point to a need of the church at the current time. After a period in which spirituality has not been stressed, many members feel this needs to be an area of renewed focus.

**Recommendations:**

2. **The church needs to see Christian education as a lifelong organizational responsibility and members need to accept it as a lifelong individual responsibility. Christian education is differentiated from spiritual growth; the first leads to growth in knowledge and understanding and is important in its own right. It may, but does not always, lead to spiritual growth. Additional opportunities for adult Christian education could be provided through book groups, speakers on special topics, and audiotape courses with discussion.**
3. **The church should emphasize and nurture spiritual growth as both the individual's responsibility and that of the body of Christ as a whole—through the support of individual spiritual growth plans, and the offering of spiritual growth groups and spiritual mentoring. The Evangelism Ministry Team should make available recommendations for pursuing spiritual growth and consider challenging every member to design his/her own plan for spiritual growth with a dedication Sunday for these plans.**
4. **Because the congregation tends to be moderate as a whole in its beliefs, the new pastor should also be moderate, both appreciating the Biblical worldview of some members of the church and respecting the views of other members who view the Bible as an historical and metaphorical text.**

<b><i>C. Rituals</i></b>
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Several questions in the survey indirectly asked about rituals. Sixty-two percent (62%) of those responding preferred change and variety in the worship service while 25% stated a preference for a regular routine with no surprises. When members were asked to rank the elements of the worship service according to their importance and meaning to them, rituals came out 6<sup>th</sup> of 6 elements, with sermons ranking highest (2.0), followed in order of ranking by prayer (2.4), music (3.2), scripture readings (3.4), sense of community (4.2), and rituals (4.7).

**Recommendations:**

5. **Members seek meaning through sermons and prayer. Rituals and strict adherence to tradition may not be as stimulating to deep thought and feeling in worship as variety, challenge, and the expression and evoking of deep emotions. There are many ways of experiencing God and the congregation appears for the most part to be open to considering nontraditional approaches if the purposes are explained in advance and if some parts of worship remain familiar. The church should seek in a new pastor an individual who is open to both tradition and diverse approaches.**

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### **D. Congregational Demographics**

Church membership has remained stable at around 210 for the past ten years. The comparison of numbers for 1993 and 2003 shows a drop of 3.3%. Age group changes are shown in the table below. See Appendix C for additional congregation demographic data.

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>Percentage Change of Total Membership</b>
Confirmation – 25	24 = 11.3%	18 = 8.7%	Down 2.6%
26-35	64 = 30.0%	16 = 7.8%	Down 22.2%
36-55	31 = 14.6%	56 = 27.2%	Up 12.6%
56-64	21 = 9.9%	36 = 17.5%	Up 7.6%
65 +	73 = 34.3%	80 = 38.8%	Up 4.5%
85+ (included in 65+)		(15 = 7.3%)	
<b>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>Down 3.3%</b>

The average church attendance has increased from 120 to 131, an increase of 9.2%. Church school enrollment has fluctuated but overall has seen a significant gain from 24 to 63. Retirees comprise nearly 42% of church membership, women make up 68% of the congregation, and 98% of the members are Caucasian.

Eighteen percent (18%) of the members surveyed in 2003 have a high school diploma, 41% have some college or technical training up to, and including, an associate degree, and 26.6% have a BA degree or a BA and some graduate level preparation up to and including an advanced degree.

The proportion of members who responded to the survey by family income groups was 23% for the group under \$25,000, 23% for the group in the \$25,000-\$34,999 range, 31.7% for the \$35,000-\$49,999 range, and 21.7% in the above \$50,000 range.

The occupational category with the most congregational members is Management, Professional, and Related with 40%. The other occupation categories and percentages of members are Sales and Office 22.5%, Service 15%, and the remaining two categories (Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance; Production, Transportation, and Materials Moving) 7.5%. There was no one in the Farming, Fishing, and Forestry occupational category.

Pledges reported as income to Presbytery in 1993 totaled \$81,231. The total amount collected through pledges to both the General Fund and the Building Fund in 2002 was \$143,954. This represents an increase of 77% over the ten year period.

Eighty-one percent (81%) of the congregational survey responders indicated that our church needs to grow and only 5% did not share this view.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 6. The community has grown while church membership has remained static. The church needs to focus its mission and evangelism first on the spiritual renewal and well-being of its members to become a healthier and more effective church. Second, it should direct its evangelism efforts towards young families with children and empty nesters to nurture a new generation of members who may prepare to take on service and leadership roles as the current “older generation” withdraws from active roles in their later years.**

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### ***E. Presbyterianism***

The congregational survey contained two questions on Presbyterianism. Asked if they understood what it means to be a Presbyterian, slightly more than half of respondents said they did, 23% gave a neutral response, and 24% said they would have difficulty citing any principle the Presbyterian Church stands for. Half expressed pride in being a Presbyterian, 27% were neutral, and 24% said the label of "Presbyterian" is not very important to them.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 7. Through sermons, minutes for mission, new member classes, and adult Christian education, the church should provide opportunities for members to learn the history of Protestantism and Presbyterianism and the unique features of Presbyterianism as contrasted with other Protestant denominations. It should make sure this subject matter is also a part of the Christian education curriculum for grades 6-12.**

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### ***F. Building and Grounds Analysis***

During the fall of 2003, an ad hoc committee appointed by Session was independently studying building and facilities use and submitted a report to Session. As a result, interior space was reallocated, with additional space devoted to Christian education, and Session meetings and accounting and other tasks moved to different venues. The Mission Study Team thus chose not to make space allocation a study goal, but recommends an evaluation of this space reallocation in June 2004.

Other building and grounds issues are the future of the rental property, the future of the manse, and the use of the vacant lot. The future of the manse is the most pressing problem as a new pastor may wish to have a housing allowance to purchase his/her own housing so that s/he builds equity.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 8. Session should evaluate the 2003 reallocation of space to facilitate the Christian education program by June 2004.**
- 9. The rental property should be viewed as an income-generating investment that can be liquidated at some future time as financial needs present themselves.**
- 10. The Building and Grounds Ministry Team should explore alternative uses for the manse, including income-generating uses to contribute to the pastor's housing allowance, until such a time as additional space is needed for expansion.**
- 11. The Building and Grounds Ministry Team should plan a landscape design for the vacant lot that allows multiple uses by church families, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and other church-related social and recreational activities.**
- 12. The Building and Grounds Ministry Team should develop a plan for redesign and extension of all landscaping, including the garden across the south side of the church with the intention of establishing a memorial garden and an attractive setting for the church entrance.**

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## SECTION 4: CONTEXT

### ***A. Community Demographics***

While the church membership has been stable, Windsor Township and Dimondale experienced a gain of 23.5% in population from 1990 to 2000. All age groups in the township grew except the 25-44 year olds, which was down almost 10%. Significant increases were realized for the 45-54, and 55-64 age groups.

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>% Change from 1990 to 2000</b>
0 – 19	Up 5%
20 – 24	Up 15.4%
25 – 44	Down 9.1%
45 – 54	Up 54.4%
55 – 64	Up 41.6%
65 – 84	Up 27.2%
85 +	Up 18.4%

The nonwhite population of the township grew by close to 4% during this period. Median household income grew by 41% to \$57,793 with all income groups below \$50,000 declining and all above \$57,793 showing significant to huge increases. See Appendix D for a comparison of 1990 and 2000 U. S. Census Bureau information for Windsor Township.

### ***B. Outside Perceptions***

Eighty-one percent (81%) of the community survey respondents indicated they have been in our church for a variety of reasons including services, bazaar and other sales, funerals, weddings, and various community meetings and activities. A majority of the impressions were favorable and described the environment as very friendly, beautiful, very nice and welcoming, and the church as a good neighbor. Other comments included community-oriented, clean, very favorable, warm and family-oriented. Thirty-eight percent (38%) were aware of programs offered by the church and over three fourths of the respondents indicated they use the Recycling Center and view it as a positive asset to the community. The Recycling Center was described as greatly needed, maintained and improved, clean, a convenient location, exceptional and very helpful.

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of community survey respondents indicated they are not formally affiliated with a church. A majority responded that when visiting a church they are most impressed with a friendly and sincere congregation but are least impressed when there is pressure to join. Respondents said they choose not to attend a church because of pressure to participate and/or join, being asked for money, fear of venturing into the unknown, taking the first step to get acquainted with a church is very difficult, and lack of time.

It was reported the church can be helpful by continuing the recycling program but needs to improve in the areas of pastoral outreach to shut-ins and follow-up after deaths. A majority of the respondents who regularly attend a church had positive views of our church and suggested our churches may work together by developing a community Bible study, increasing outreach to non-believers and having a welcoming environment.

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### ***C. Issues, Needs, Concerns***

The majority of the community respondents believe a lack of youth activities is the biggest problem our community faces. The majority of the congregational responses also indicated the need for more community youth activities as our greatest community challenge. Suggestions as to the actions our church can take to help face these issues include more outreach to and working with other churches by combining resources, coordinating programs and improving communication. Other community needs reported by the members included more outreach/activities for Senior Citizens, church-oriented options for elementary school children on Wednesday afternoons, outreach to community families who do not attend church and outreach to those economically challenged.

**Recommendations:**

- 13. The church should explore opportunities with the other Dimondale area churches to develop a “Community Christian Coalition”, joining resources to better serve community needs. Examples of support and services that such a joint venture could address include food bank operations, senior services, junior-and senior-high youth activities, summer children’s programs and Christian music concerts in the park.**
- 14. The Pastor and Member Care Ministry Team should increase visits to shut-ins and have consistent follow-up after deaths, funerals and other times of personal tragedies.**
- 15. The church should increase community outreach that includes informing the community of church programs and activities and creating a welcoming atmosphere for visitors.**

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## SECTION 5: PROGRAMS

### **A. Overall Program Recommendations**

*Blessed are those who trust in the Lord...They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.*

*Jeremiah 17:7-8*

We are too large to be a small church, yet too small to be a large church. Larger churches are defined by PCUSA as having 250+ members. Our membership for 2002 was 208. The PCUSA Ten-Year Trends report detailing a 10 year history of total membership can be found in Appendix E.

Research indicates that church program preferences which are likely to exceed the national average in the 48821 zip code area include marriage enrichment opportunities, church sponsored day school, family activity and divorce recovery programs. As an overall category, programs related to recreation (as opposed to spiritual development, personal development and community programs) are most significant.

Our members are ready to serve, but need more information and guidance on where needs exist. Members desire to use their time, talents and spiritual gifts for the good of the church. Many are not aware where opportunities exist for them to do so.

The current ministry team structures leave the guidance and leadership in some areas ambiguous, overlapping, or missing.

#### **Recommendations**

- 16. Session should emphasize we do not seek growth just for growth's sake--or to meet the goal of more closely resembling the profile of the neighborhood--or to attract visitors for the purpose of increasing membership counts. We seek growth to enable us to do more for others and for ourselves.**
- 17. Session should organize programs into a tree-like structure where:**
  - **Essential program ministries serve as the root, or base, to everything we do,**
  - **Leadership positions provide framework and structure, as a tree trunk, to overall church mission, and**
  - **Action ministries act as the branches allowing us to reach, grow and serve God's call.**
- 18. Session should assign the responsibility for developing and achieving each program's goals and objectives to a Ministry Team, led by an Elder.**
- 19. Ministry teams should develop clear goals for each program ministry that satisfy the church's overall mission. Session should play an active role in ministry goal development and ultimately approve such goals.**
- 20. Ministry teams should seek opportunities to schedule functions and activities for different program ministry activities back-to-back, or at the same time. For example, having an Adult Bible Study after choir practice is now working well for those who enjoy participating in both.**
- 21. Ministry teams should consider using creative, holistic small group approaches whenever appropriate to help build stronger, caring relationships among us. Examples of small groups that might be generated include discussion groups with a focus on a particular**

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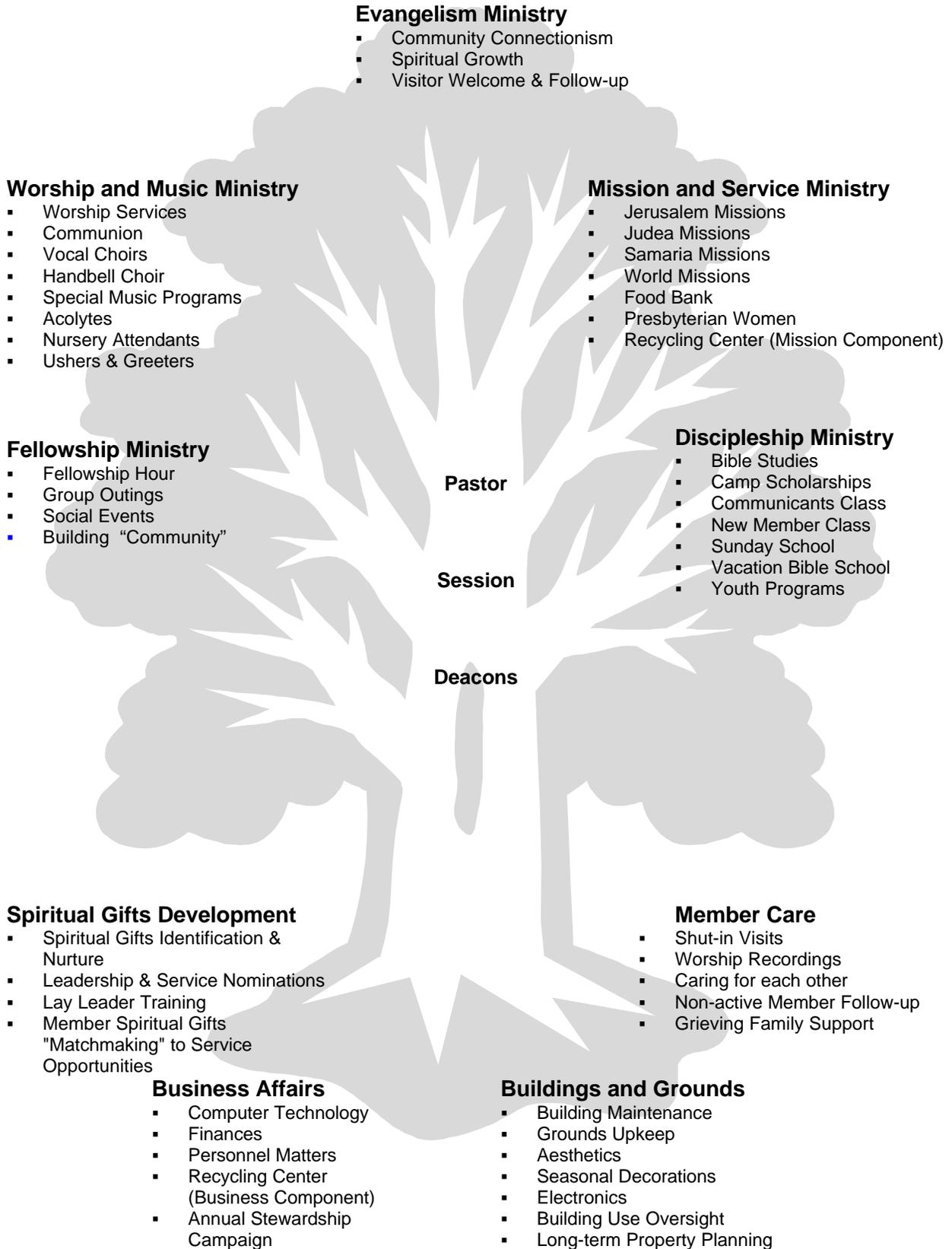
**book, spiritual growth groups, “extended family” groups, and groups that focus on new perspectives within contemporary Christianity or Christian-based approaches to current social, cultural and political situations.**

The tree-like structure for program ministries is found on the following page. Analysis and recommendations for each program ministry follow in alphabetical order. Finally, an analysis and recommendations for the Recycling Center are presented.

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**Root and Branch Ministry Team Organization**



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## ***B. Buildings and Grounds Ministry***

Management and maintenance of building and grounds have been the responsibility of Business Affairs in addition to the many other weighty areas that team administers. The general appearance and upkeep of our buildings and grounds reflects the importance we place on providing facilities to serve others. Assuring buildings and grounds are well maintained and functional to meet their many uses is a visual "welcome sign" to many. Management and maintenance also includes internal systems such as plumbing and water systems, electrical wiring, speakers, microphones and related sound systems.

Many of our areas are used for multiple purposes. It is difficult to designate a room for a single function without impacting space available for other purposes.

### **Recommendations:**

- 22. Responsibility for buildings and grounds management and maintenance should be moved from Business Affairs and made a team in its own right.**
- 23. The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team should conduct an in-depth building and ground analysis to better understand and document the multiple uses of different parts of our buildings. The Mission Study Handbook offers one method for doing this analysis.**
- 24. The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team should maintain a "Master Plan" of both short- and long-term facility needs, including routine maintenance items.**
- 25. The Mission Study Team recommends improvements to the church's main entry and other locations to assure our church properties present a warm and welcoming atmosphere for all. The Building and Grounds Ministry Team should consider adding welcome and directional signs at various places throughout the building.**
- 26. The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team should organize small groups of "handy-men/women" willing and able to do facilities and grounds maintenance, including flower garden care and landscaping.**
- 27. The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team should continue seasonal clean-up days, seeking involvement and encouraging participation.**
- 28. The church should continue to welcome non-church affiliated groups to buildings for meetings, blood drives, precinct voting and other like activities. The Building and grounds Ministry Team should assume oversight of the facility when rented and assure the renting groups have a clear understanding of their responsibilities as our guests, particularly for clean-up, furniture arrangement, etc., at the conclusion of their event.**
- 29. The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team should form a member group that is responsible for, and familiar with, the electronic equipment (sound systems, TVs, VCRs, microphones, etc.). A member of this group should be on hand for each worship service to assist with microphones, speakers, recorded music and service recordings.**

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## ***C. Business Affairs Ministry***

The average contribution per member in 2002 was \$1,162.00. This is higher than \$915.38, the 2002 average for all PCUSA congregations. The average contribution per worship attendee in 2002 was \$1,845.00. This is higher than \$1,672.68, the 2002 average for all PCUSA congregations. The PCUSA

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Ten-Year Trends report detailing a 10-year history of contributions can be found in Appendix E. Based on the average household income of \$61,295 per year for the 48821 zip code area, 32% are likely to contribute more than \$500 per year to churches. This is 1% more than the national average of 31% for this income.

Though we are blessed with generous monetary-giving levels from members and worship service guests in comparison to other area churches, the church's annual stewardship drive does not produce sufficient income to meet the proposed budget. In a typical year the annual budget is met by a combination of pledges, gifts and other income. Sources of such gifts and other income in recent years have included Presbyterian Women, loose offerings, rentals, weddings and other building uses, hosting of the Parade of Homes, and unpledged giving. However, in 2003 the sum of pledges, gifts and other income was insufficient to meet the budget and the church had to cut programs. Overall pledging does not meet the budget and has necessitated reliance on less reliable sources of income to make up the difference.

Congregational survey responses indicate members wish to gain a better understanding of financial matters and needs. Survey respondents also suggested increased church leader involvement, personal contact and financial information would benefit stewardship activities.

Stewardship involves more than giving of monetary gifts. The giving of time, talents and spiritual gifts is especially important with the current economic climate and challenges for us.

The use of and reliance on computers has increased significantly over recent years. Computers are becoming a "must" for business and home, and e-mail is a common communication method. Many members and non-members use the Internet as a learning tool, including learning more about our church. Computer systems and our Internet site must be kept up to date to keep pace in this field.

#### **Recommendations**

- 30. The church should continue the annual stewardship drive using a format similar to that used in recent years.**
- 31. The church should strengthen the staffing of church programs as funds allow.**
- 32. The Business Affairs Ministry Team should continue managing the Recycling Center operations with profit-based business and operational strategies. Recommend distribution of profits to a wider range of ministry programs within the church so that a broader benefit can be realized.**
- 33. The Business Affairs Ministry Team should extend campaigns beyond the annual stewardship drives, using a variety of venues and approaches and use creative and innovative, targeted-purpose, specific goal appeals where appropriate.**
- 34. The Business Affairs Ministry Team should seek outside sources of revenue to enhance our contributions. Investigate the possibilities for applying for grants that could bring needed additional resources to program ministries.**
- 35. Session should provide annual paid-staff training, including workshops, journal subscriptions and like opportunities to ensure skills and knowledge are kept current.**
- 36. The Business Affairs Ministry Team should maintain and expand computer hardware, software and Internet access in pace with changes in this field and assure staff has access to the computer technology needed to do their jobs effectively. It could establish generic church-based e-mail accounts for the Pastor, Secretary, Recycling Center Director, Music Director, Session and others to allow "electronic access" to these people by both members and non-members. Examples of names of such e-mail accounts are Pastor@fpc.org,**

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**Session@fpc.org and Music@fpc.org. The Team should maintain and expand our church's web-site as a communication tool for members, guests and potential first time visitors.**

#### ***D. Discipleship Ministry***

*"Take the teachings that you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, and entrust them to reliable people, who will be able to teach others also."*

*2 Timothy 2:2*

Christian education enrollment for 2002 was 63. This represents a gain of 162.5% from 1993 but is significantly lower than 124, the 2002 average for all PCUSA congregations. Most PCUSA congregations, regardless of size, report less than 50% of their total members participate in Christian education. The PCUSA Ten-Year Trends report detailing a 10-year history of worship attendance can be found in the Mission Study Appendix E.

We are blessed with dedicated and caring Sunday School and Bible study leaders and teachers who volunteer their time to teach our children, youth and adults about God. Average attendance for children and youth Sunday School classes is well in alignment with numbers of members attending Sunday worship services. When youth and children are at worship, it is highly likely they will attend Sunday School classes. The Discipleship Ministry Team is currently evaluating curriculum for the 2004-2005 school year, as the subscription to the current curriculum, "Bible Quest", is about to expire.

There is great concern and support for expanding youth programs, not only for members, but for community youth as well.

A bare majority (50%) of members responding to the congregational survey said they had a good Christian education growing up while another quarter said they had gaps in their knowledge of scripture and church history. Sixty percent (60%) expressed an interest in Bible study to increase their understanding of their faith while 18% indicated no interest. Seventeen percent (17%) said they were interested only in Biblical accounts while 46% said they were also interested in 20<sup>th</sup> century archeological findings and new historical interpretations of Biblical texts. Gender-specific Bible study groups tend to discourage but do not prohibit attendance of people of the opposite sex.

Small groups are well received for adult Bible study, but low participation at some may not be conducive to continuation. Adults have recently enjoyed a book discussion group after Sunday worship service, with 8-10 participants discussing "The Purpose Driven Life" by Richard Warren. Adult Bible Study on Wednesday evenings has been averaging 14 attendees. Attendance for the Wednesday evening group may be positively attributed to its being held after choir practice. The Men's Breakfast Study at 6:30 a.m. is also well attended with 4-7 men attending weekly.

Camp scholarships are provided to elementary- through senior high-aged youth of congregation families and within the community for summer church camp attendance. Camp scholarships have also been made available to children through Advent House Ministries. Recycling Center profit is used to fund a large percentage of these scholarships, along with endowments and benevolence giving. Families are asked to pay the non-refundable down payment (\$45 in 2003) for each camper's session. The remaining balance (about \$190 per camper, depending on camping session) is paid with camp scholarships and is limited to one camp session per camper per year.

Families are very appreciative of the camp scholarships, but feel they could be reduced given current financial problems. Campers enjoy the camping experiences--Camp Greenwood Forever!

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### **Recommendations**

37. The Discipleship Ministry should design a comprehensive junior- and senior-high discipleship program ministry building on existing activities that gets these kids excited about God! A strong emphasis should be placed on helping our youth identify and nurture their spiritual gifts and learn how they can use their gifts toward mission and service to God's call. This is the prime time to accentuate identification and nurturing of spiritual gifts for junior- and senior-high youth, as they are beginning to prepare themselves for future academic goals and careers.
38. Camp scholarships are worthwhile and should continue at some level. Session should reduce camp scholarships to 50% of the camping fee (minus non-refundable registration fees paid by the camper) and develop methods whereby families seeking financial assistance can apply for a higher scholarship amount based on need. Opportunities for campers (as individuals or a group) to earn money for camping expenses such as washing cars, performing service chores for congregation members, assisting with church programs, etc., should be extended. The Discipleship Team could develop a nomination process where scholarships can be extended to children outside the church member families based on established criteria.
39. The Discipleship Team should provide training, workshops and like opportunities to Christian education teachers and leaders to enrich their teaching skills and understanding of the curriculum.
40. The Discipleship Team should assure youth's and children's curriculum and training materials are relevant to today's celebrations and challenges such as ethic diversity, handicapping conditions, teen issues (peer pressure, drugs, self-image) and the seasonal life of the church.
41. The Discipleship Team could provide opportunities for families of our children to become familiar with the Sunday School curriculum whereby they can know stories, themes and scriptures that are used by their children in Sunday School.
42. The church should continue to warmly welcome all in Christian education groups.
43. The Discipleship Team should evaluate Bible study opportunities, including the pros and cons of gender-specific groups, and consider a wider variety of options for all.

### ***E. Evangelism Ministry***

*"Jesus said to his followers, Go everywhere in the world, and tell the Good News to everyone."*

*Mark 16:152*

Historically, this program ministry's activities have been directed towards inviting community families to our church during times of special worship services and events. All but one community survey responder knew where our church was located, and half had attended a worship service. Many have visited our church for other reasons including weddings, sales and bazaars, community meetings and events, funerals, boy scouts, voting and blood donation. While most survey responders felt our church is welcoming and friendly, this was not the case with 1/3 of those responding.

Our church is very visible to the community. People know where we are located, and approximately 150 Eaton County residents a day drive through our parking lot to bring recyclable materials to the Recycling Center.

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The results of the Natural Church Development Survey showed that “passionate spirituality” received the second lowest score. Both this result and the spiritual growth question from the congregational survey point to a need of the church at the current time—after a period in which spirituality has not been stressed, many members feel that this needs to be an area of renewed focus. This task fits well with evangelism programs, as it can be characterized as evangelizing to ourselves. Truly, evangelism is everything we do.

The congregational survey responses indicated a desire to increase community outreach activities. The Mission Study Team believes that we must first focus on ourselves to better prepare us for sharing the Good News with non-members.

#### **Recommendations**

- 44. The Evangelism Ministry should research and implement evangelism efforts targeted inward, towards ourselves, to enrich and strengthen the spirituality in and among us. Provide guidance to members in developing or revitalizing their own spirituality.**
- 45. Each member should be encouraged to share the Good News in a manner in which they feel comfortable as part of their normal daily life.**
- 46. The Evangelism Team should be responsible for improving our one-on-one follow-up with those who identify themselves as visitors, either through the Deacons or Team members.**
- 47. The Evangelism Team should take the leadership in conceptualizing the Recycling Center’s physical area as the “Welcome Center for the First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale”. It should actively promote church ministries, services and worship opportunities as invitations to come join us!**

### **F. Fellowship Ministries**

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers."*

*Acts 2:42*

We enjoy the fellowship experienced in social activities and group outings. Fellowship functions help us get to know each other better, and we welcome more opportunities to do so. Our congregation sees value in fellowship activities and wants to expand these activities.

Fellowship and getting to know each other better are excellent, intangible benefits gained by getting involved in a church-sponsored activity that is of personal interest. When every member is warmly invited and welcomed, fellowship and member care will grow.

#### **Recommendations**

- 48. The Fellowship Ministry Team should organize a wide variety of social approaches that "offer something for everyone" several times a year. The Team should develop fellowship events that are as diversified as our membership. Activities should include church-wide events to enhance our sense of community. Fellowship activities targeted for specific age groups and common interests are also recommended.**
- 49. The Fellowship Ministry Team should use a mixture of techniques (newsletter articles, member trivia questions, "members of the month", photo boards and the like) to help us know more about each other's life events, hobbies, interests and talents. Personal**

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fellowship and member care develop from knowing more about each other. Mission and service opportunities related to a specific hobby, talent and/or interest may also evolve.

50. **Members should be encouraged to wear nametags not just at Sunday worship, but at other fellowship-oriented activities where it is likely that not everyone will know each other. The Fellowship Ministry Team should design activities in which members, children, and visitors are encouraged to mix with and establish relationships with others in the church that they do not know.**

### **G. Member Care Ministry**

*"A new commandment I give you, that you love one another."*

*John 13:34*

Member care has been identified as a fundamental or "root" program. The Ministry Team structure established in December 2002 did not assign member care to a particular ministry team.

Our church can be doing more in caring for its members and those around us with prayers, spiritual support and extending ourselves to serve others in need. Congregational survey responders offered a wide list of ideas for doing so including caring groups, prayer chain expansion, a buddy system for those in need, increased contact with those in need and expanded services for shut-ins.

We are ready to serve and care, but are not always aware of member needs.

#### **Recommendations**

51. **Session should bring to light the importance member care has as a foundation ministry by establishing a Ministry Team solely devoted to member care.**
52. **Session should challenge all of us to develop caring relationships among ourselves.**
53. **All groups and teams should include member care concerns as part of opening and closing prayers for all meetings, activities and social events whenever feasible.**
54. **The Member Care Ministry Team should expand personal visits, cards and spiritual support to those in need. The Team should increase awareness of church members to those needing support.**
55. **The Member Care Ministry Team should continue follow-up with non-active members in a caring and concerned matter.**

### **H. Mission and Service Ministry**

*"In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the word"*

*John 17:18*

Congregational survey responses indicated a preference for our church to focus on a few missions and do them well (55%), rather than supporting all causes that request our support (21%). Neutrality on this issue was expressed in 24% of the responses.

It is unclear to many how missions are selected for support, yet there is a strong membership desire to direct mission activities to local and community needs.

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Our Food Bank provides a week's worth of groceries to 3-8 families residing in Windsor Township each month. The Food Bank operates with volunteer members who give a total of 15-25 hours of their time each month to this cause. Donations received from various groups and proceeds from the local CWS/CROP Walk are warmly received and used to purchase food commodities from the Red Cross.

The terminology from The Purpose-Driven Life of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and world missions reflects circles of concern from Jerusalem, or in this case, First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale, outward to the entire world. The mixture of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and world missions is important with decreasing levels of service and support as one moves outward from the local community.

Personalized connections to missions and "hands-on" mission opportunities were mentioned often in the congregational survey responses. Hosting visitors from international missions and organized mission trips for adults and youth help us all to learn and understand more about the needs of others.

### **Recommendations**

- 56. Presbyterian Women should widen the focus of their programs, structure and activities to allow more missions and service opportunities to our diversified women's membership. The organization should explore using small groups or women's circles in addition to church-wide events to reach out to more women.**
- 57. The Mission and Service Ministry Team should increase communication about mission opportunities which we are currently involved in and/or support.**
- 58. Existing connections to national and international mission opportunities should be continued.**
- 59. The Mission and Service Ministry Team should work to provide more varied and frequent "hands-on" mission opportunities of both local and distant focus for all ages.**
- 60. The Mission and Service Ministry Team should continue the Food Bank as a local mission to our community.**
- 61. Session should manage the Recycling Center *profits* with mission-oriented approaches expanding to more program ministries. A Recycling Center-focused sub-committee may be appropriate.**
- 62. The Mission and Service Ministry should increase internal awareness of tangible and intangible benefits gained from the Recycling Center operations. The Team should educate church members, groups using our facilities, and community members about how the church's mission and ministry goals, and, most importantly, the place God has given us to live, benefit from the Recycling Center.**
- 63. The Mission and Service Ministry Team should continue to create awareness among members of the need to be good stewards of God's earth so that our conservation efforts apply to every aspect of our lives. "Put our money where our mouth is."**
- 64. The Mission and Service Ministry Team should stimulate volunteerism from church members, groups using our facilities, customers, and community members for serving as "weekend hosts". The Team could develop a short training program and reference aids for volunteers. The Team should oversee this program, since serving as a weekend host is an excellent way for members to use their time towards environmental stewardship and service. It may also be an opportunity for junior- and senior-high youth, with appropriate supervision, to earn "service credits", as was done in 2003 for camp scholarships.**

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## **I. Spiritual Gifts Development Ministry**

*"God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings."*

*1 Peter 4:10*

Spiritual gifts from God exist in all of us. Discovering, nurturing and using these gifts, as we are called by God to do, to is an on-going process. Members have a rich diversity of gifts that may be used to build up the church community. Sometimes, however, people are unaware of their gifts or are participating in roles for which they have no special gifts and thus feel unproductive. The church needs a way of helping individuals to discern their gifts and assigning people to roles that match the gifts they bring. Finding the place God has called a person to be and to give in that place is to feel the Holy Spirit working within. Many members who are "nominal" members are that perhaps only because they have not discovered their gifts or the fit between their gifts and the needs of the church that brings a sense of harmony and wholeness. The church is acting in a responsible stewardship of gifts when all members know and use their gifts for the glory of God and the needs of others.

### **Recommendations**

- 65. The Spiritual Gifts Development Ministry should work with each ministry team to determine the ministry needs it will address and the gifts needed to do so. All ministry teams should increase formal communications about time, talent and spiritual gifts needs for ministry programs. The Spiritual Gifts Team could open forums on what it means to serve in different leadership roles in the church. Helping people understand varying lengths of time commitment, roles and responsibilities and creative opportunities for service may help them in making informed choices about their participation.**
- 66. The Spiritual Gifts Development Ministry should annually distribute a "Time and Talent Survey" as was done with the 2003 annual stewardship drive, allowing members to express interest in the giving of their time and talents. The Team should supplement the survey with individual contact and support for members who seek to uncover and use their gifts in service.**
- 67. The Spiritual Gifts Development Ministry, with the Discipleship Team, should develop age-appropriate spiritual gift programs geared toward junior- and senior-high youth as a useful tool for the Discipleship Ministry Team.**
- 68. The Spiritual Gifts Development Ministry should actively seek to match people's gifts to the ministry in need of those gifts.**
- 69. Throughout the church year and especially at its beginning with the annual formation of ministry teams and nomination of Elders and deacons, the Spiritual Gifts Development Ministry should encourage all members to be actively engaged in at least one ministry to which they can apply their gifts with enthusiasm and love.**
- 70. Session should ensure comprehensive training for Elders and Deacons prior to ordination/installation. The provision and quality of training reflect the importance we attach to these positions.**

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## **J. Worship and Music Ministry**

*"Praise the Lord, all people on earth, praise his glory and might. Praise the Lord's glorious name; bring an offering and come into his Temple."*

*I Chronicles 16:28-29*

Average worship attendance for 2002 was 131 (62% of total membership). This is higher than 121, the 2002 average for all PCUSA congregations. The PCUSA Ten-Year Trends report detailing a 10-year history of worship attendance can be found in Appendix E.

Research indicates that households in the 48821 zip code area prefer a somewhat traditional church worship style. However this finding contrasts with congregational survey responses to this topic. On the issue of change and variety in the worship service, a majority (62%) likes some change and variety while about one out of four prefer a regular routine. Almost half expressed a preference for traditional language in the service, and only 13% seemed to view traditional language as unhelpful. We like change and variety in our worship service, as long as they are not introduced too rapidly.

Many of our members enjoy music and using their musical gifts. While 44% think there is a place for more contemporary music in worship, 19% prefer only traditional music and another 37% are neutral. There is room for contemporary music, change and variety, and non-traditional language in worship service but not time for additional music. Even so, there is strong interest in expanding all music ministry opportunities, particularly for children and youth.

Two thirds of the respondents said that they feel the presence of God in worship always or usually, 30% feel it sometimes and only 4% rarely or never feel God's presence in worship. The sermon's message, prayers, music and scripture readings are most important to members and provide meaning to worship services. Sense of community and rituals (creeds, etc.) have a lesser contribution to worship. The Word must be taught with enthusiasm and inspiration! We count on that to help us keep our focus on God.

With the diversity of preference for style, mode and content of worship services, it is important that we are flexible and welcome diversity of music, types of worship services, and continue to include all members as participants.

### **Recommendations**

- 71. The music director and pastor should continue to connect worship music with the sermon message and to work closely in this area to intertwine these worship components.**
- 72. The Worship and Music Ministry Team should involve more senior- and junior- high youth in worship services by asking them to serve as ushers, greeters, readers and lay leaders.**
- 73. The Worship and Music Team should work to expand music ministry opportunities to all, particularly children and youth.**
- 74. The church should retain Sunday morning worship service in a blended-traditional style until other worship service opportunities are implemented and evaluated.**
- 75. The Worship and Music Team should explore, design and develop additional worship opportunities other than Sunday mornings, with a blended-contemporary style.**
- 76. The Worship and Music Team should seek additional outlets, in addition to Sunday worship services, for using our musical talents to the good of the church, and the good of serving God.**

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77. The Buildings and Grounds Ministry Team should assure sound systems are adequately working so everyone can hear and enjoy the worship service. The Worship and Music Ministry Team should provide tips for speaking and singing to those using microphones.

**K. Recycling Center**

*“The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are His”*

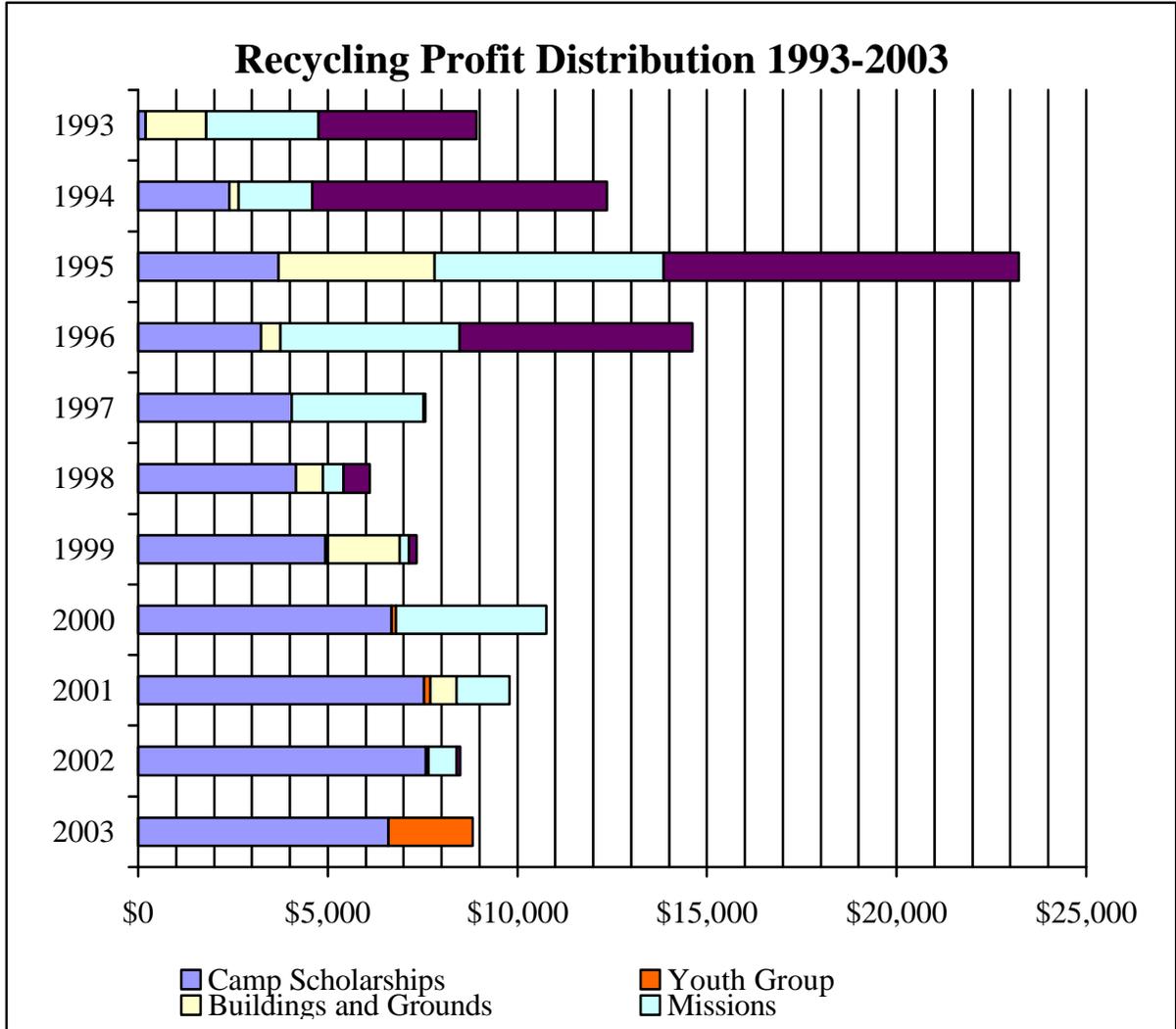
*Psalms 24:1*

**What We Learned**

The Recycling Center serves and operates as a “subsidiary business” of, and for, our church. That is, it is a revenue generating operation that requires business-oriented oversight, leadership and management. Profitable operations depend on:

- a. An on-site manager who is actively involved with day-to-day activities and possesses strong business management, staff supervision, customer service and accounting skills and knowledge,
- b. Continued financial support from local government grants,
- c. General Motors Jobs Bank agreements, or similar programs, which provide low/no cost, skilled staffing, and
- d. A good market price for collected materials.

Funds generated by the Recycling Center are used to support ministry programs in mission and service. One discipleship ministry program, camp scholarships for youth, benefits the most from profits, yet funds have also been used for youth group activities, facility improvements, local, national and international mission ministries, community support and conference attendance. Annual contributions to ministry programs have ranged from a low of \$4,710.00 in 1998 to \$23,231.21 in 1995 as shown in the following chart.



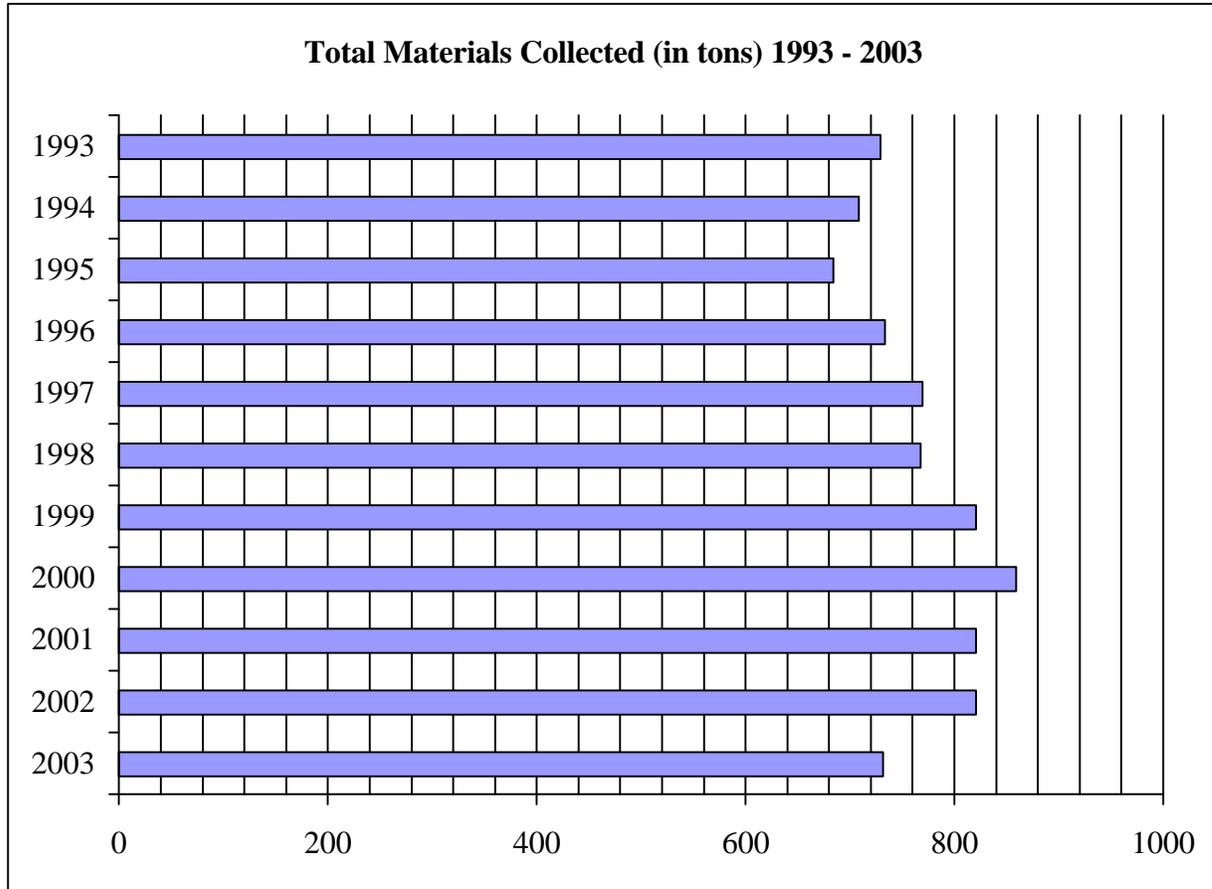
On average, 200 people *per day* drop off materials for recycling. This varies with weather, time of year, and day of week. Up to 500 people *per day* will stop at the Recycling Center on late spring and summer weekends. Customers come from as far away as Jackson, Portland and East Lansing to drop off materials. It is estimated that one out of every four patrons resides outside of Eaton County. Additionally, recyclable materials are picked up from local businesses, an elementary school, the Dimondale Post Office and two print shops on a weekly basis.

The staffing, management and operation of the Recycling Center became less stable following the retirement of Reverend Toth, who had provided leadership and direction for the operation, in September 2002. The manager hired in July 2003 with strong business operations and accounting skills has brought improvements in all areas. Despite losses prior to June, over \$8,822 was available for Camp Greenwood scholarships and youth service "work camp" fees.

Material-handling changes made over the past six months have significantly reduced the need for people to sort colored and white paper and open "junk mail" picked up at the local post office. Volunteers would be most beneficial on weekends when the Recycling Center is not staffed. Volunteers on-site would direct patrons to the proper areas for their materials and politely refuse products that are not accepted.

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No study of the Recycling Center is complete without noting the volume of material diverted from landfills by our Recycling Center. This totals 10,190 tons from 1972 to 2002. Total for 1993 – 2003 are shown in the following chart. Total materials for 2003 are an estimate, as records for January – June are incomplete.



**What We Heard**

Recycling Center patrons and community members consider the center an easy and convenient way for them to participate in recycling efforts. They view the Recycling Center as a much needed and valued community service.

Our church has earned a positive recycling-oriented reputation and is quite well known because of the Recycling Center.

Church members see the Recycling Center primarily as a mission of our church. Environmental stewardship, taking care of God's earth, is viewed as an important mission-oriented focus of the center.

The Recycling Center has been a point of contention among church leaders and members, particularly during a period of financial instability in the past year. Congregational Survey responses indicate a strong desire to continue the center's operation. Fifty-eight percent (58%) desire to operate it as a mission/service regardless of profit/loss. A business-orientation with profit/lost was preferred by 34% of the survey responders. Closing the center completely is favored by 7% of the survey responders.

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### **What It Means to Us**

The Recycling Center is a stellar example of a service commitment to environmental stewardship and taking care of God's earth.

Recycling Center revenues are a welcome financial contribution to our church's coffers, but these funds primarily benefit one program ministry component (camp scholarship programs) and a very limited segment of our membership.

The Recycling Center provides multi-dimensional benefits to our church; thus success and failure must be measured against multiple criteria. Personal opinions about the Center tend to be narrowly focused, without general knowledge of the broader picture.

The congregation, and possibly some leaders, are not fully informed about the Recycling Center, or how our ministry programs other than youth camp scholarships and properties benefit. Because of this, rumors and opinions based on incomplete information have circulated.

### **Recommendations:**

- 78. The church should manage the Recycling Center *operations* with profit-based business and operational strategies. This is included as a duty of the Business Affairs Team.**
- 79. The church should manage the Recycling Center *profits* with mission-oriented approaches extending proceeds to more program ministries to support their work. This is included as a duty of Session.**
- 80. The church should retain the Recycling Center on church property, or very near proximity. This will continue to visually demonstrate our community service ethic and environmental stewardship responsibility, and provide access to potential new visitors and members. In the event a location move is recommended for business and operational strategy, neighborhood, or public interest reasons, the church should consider relinquishing sole management responsibilities (and sole rights to proceeds) and pursue joint partnerships with other entities.**
- 81. The church should discontinue the direct relationship between earnings and youth camp scholarships. Session should implement a process for allocating annual recycling profits to ministry programs during annual budget development.**
- 82. The Mission and Service Ministry Team should work to increase internal awareness of tangible and intangible benefits gained from the Recycling Center operations. The Mission and Service Ministry Team should educate church members, groups using our facilities, and community members about how the church's mission and ministry goals, and most importantly, the place God has given us to live, benefit from the Recycling Center.**
- 83. The church should conceptualize the center's physical area as the "Welcome Center for the First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale". The Evangelism Ministry Team should actively promote church ministries, services and worship opportunities to patrons as invitations to come join us!**
- 84. The church should promote volunteerism from church members, groups using our facilities, customers, and community members for serving as "weekend hosts". The Mission and Service Ministry Team should develop a short training program and reference aids for volunteers. This Team should oversee this program, since serving as a weekend host is an excellent way for members to use their time towards environmental stewardship**

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and service. It may also be an opportunity for junior- and senior-high youth to earn "service credits", as was done in 2002 for camp scholarships.

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## SECTION 6: PROCESS

### ***A. Communications***

Eighty percent (80%) of members responding to the congregational survey indicated they felt comfortable expressing ideas and concerns. They were likely to go to the Pastor, Elders, the Parish Associate, and the secretary in that order, with going to the pastor the most frequently mentioned option.

However only 60% said they felt well informed and 27% said they were not well informed. The main complaint stems from lack of a centralized communication source. The newsletter is the major form of communication with our membership. The newsletter is a very important vehicle to relay current and relevant information to members.

Many felt there have been too many surprises, too many rumors, and changes have not been explained. Some expressed an interest in reading Session minutes. Many want to hear changes explained from the pulpit or by committee leaders at more frequent congregational meetings.

#### **Recommendations**

- 85. The pastor and parish associate, elders and deacons must find ways to be more available to hear and respond to ideas and concerns.**
- 86. Pastor(s), session, deacons, congregational leaders and other interested congregational members should participate in a communication workshop to identify more specifically the needs and modes of communication that will be effective.**
- 87. The congregation should have some way of accessing Session minutes.**
- 88. Each monthly newsletter should include a regular Session column.**
- 89. The church should publish the monthly newsletter every month, not combining July and August together.**
- 90. Ministry teams' responsibilities and chairpersons' names should be readily available to members to facilitate access.**
- 91. Ministry Teams and Session need to do a better job of sharing information either from the pulpit or at coffee hour or at more frequent congregational meetings.**

### ***B. Leadership Selection***

Members indicated leaders seem to be chosen on the basis of availability, strengths, and reputation as a hard worker. A few felt that a small number of people, or even an in-group, rotated in these positions. Suggestions for better ways to select leaders focused on prayer for direction and identifying people's gifts as well as identifying expectations of leaders and creating teams of experienced and new leaders. While 80% said elders are accessible, some said they never seek an elder out. Some said they didn't know who the elders were.

Members indicated they have appreciated and enjoyed having the pastor's family involved in the life of the church. Suggestions received from the congregational surveys for qualities to seek in a new permanent pastor are that s/he should:

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Reflect a strong spiritual calling and personal relationship with God.  
Teach us to apply God's word to our daily lives and increase our faith.  
Write and give inspiring sermons.  
Be sincere, caring, and humble.  
Be available to all the people of the congregation and follow up on members.  
Be energetic, honest, enthusiastic, and people-oriented.  
Continue the church's tradition of community involvement.  
Be a good communicator and listener, open to ideas and concerns, including new ideas.  
Be a respectful mediator when conflicts occur.  
Be a strong leader but not a dictator, empowering others and valuing their contributions.  
Be genuinely interested in and encourage youth of our church and community—they are our future.  
Have concern for elder members and their needs—they are our wisdom and anchors.  
Be able to lead the congregation towards a deeper spirituality.  
Have some knowledge of the business aspects of leading a church.

**Recommendations:**

- 92. The Spiritual Gifts Development Team should help every member to identify her/his unique gifts including spiritual gifts, leadership skills and strength of commitment to completing tasks.**
- 93. Session should clearly identify the needs of the church in view of the mission statement and the requirements of different tasks. The Spiritual Gifts Development Ministry Team could hold open forums on what it means to serve in different leadership roles in the church. Helping people understand the varying lengths of time commitment, roles and responsibilities and creative opportunities for service may assist them in making informed choices about their participation.**
- 94. The Spiritual Gifts Development Team should develop a plan for nurturing new leaders. It should, as well, make more intentional efforts to develop lay leadership committed to promoting fuller participation of members in ministries and service using small group settings**
- 95. Elders must be more visible and accessible. Elders' names and pictures could be linked to the ministry team each leads and the responsibilities of the team. Elders should speak from the pulpit occasionally and be visibly available during coffee hour.**
- 96. Session should prioritize the strengths the congregation feels the new pastor should bring for use by the Pastor Nominating Committee. Qualities of character, style, and experience that appear critical for a new pastor in light of the content of this report include:**
  - 1. A commitment to encouraging and developing lay leadership to promote the participation of members in ministries and service in small group settings**
  - 2. Deep spirituality**
  - 3. The ability to understand and challenge the theological views of others**
  - 4. The related ability to challenge people's thinking about any issue without being abrasive and to allow room for agreeing to disagree**
  - 5. The willingness to remain nonpolitical in the role of pastor of the church**
  - 6. Teaching and modeling skills to help people to learn to pray and to find meaning in disciplined Bible study**
  - 7. The desire to "learn" the congregation.**
- 97. Session should commission another Natural Church Development Survey after the new pastor has served a year in order to determine whether changes recommended by this Mission Study have made a difference in the life of the church.**

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### **C. Decision Making**

Questions in the survey about communication and decision making inspired many responses.

While 74% of the congregational survey responders said they fully trust the way decisions are made, another 17% do not. Some requested more information, and 9% expressed a “somewhat trust” in the way decisions were made. Three quarters feel their voice is heard and taken into consideration and 79% feel church leaders are open to new ideas and differences in opinions. Some people indicated they feel they have more input into decisions now. A majority feels there has not been enough information and communication in advance of decisions.

People want to know what the issues are as they are happening and want more feedback from Session. Suggestions included more business or dinner meetings, more minutes being circulated, and more surveys and even straw votes to assess members’ opinions on important matters. People are less likely to resist change if it is known in advance and the rationale understood. More information may spur more people to become active members.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 98. Session and other decision-makers should take time together to discern the will of God rather than rush into decisions.**
- 99. Session and the pastor should continue to empower ministry teams to develop and implement their ideas. This will move us from being a pastor-led church to becoming a faith-based, people-directed church.**
- 100. Session should provide training and guidance to elders, deacons and other congregational leaders involved with specific program ministries on how to effectively introduce and manage change, and then objectively evaluate results.**
- 101. Session should find ways to improve communication between ministry teams.**
- 102. Session should find ways to involve more members in the decision making process through the development of more opportunities for presentation of information to members and opportunities for discussion of alternatives, such as informational meetings and open forums focused on a specific issue. People need ways to express their opinions in a climate of safety and love.**

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### **D. Conflict Resolution**

Asked about conflict in our church, 75% of those responding to the congregational member survey had something to say. “Change” and “the display of flags in our sanctuary” were the issues named as having created the most conflict. The third major area that has created conflict is the Recycling Center. Considerably less prominence was placed on issues dealing with contemporary music and style of worship services, including offering an additional contemporary service and the method by which the elements are distributed during communion.

Communication to members about different views on an issue is important. Sometimes the best way to resolve an issue may be recognition that in some situations, total agreement is not possible. We as Christians need to recognize that disagreement can coexist with love for one another. In responding to conflict, members of our congregation and the Christian community should consider asking God through

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prayer and discussion to have both sides recognize differences that each side can accept. Members suggested we fully use tools of effective communications such as discussion forums, congregational meetings, special meetings of the congregation, and newsletters to inform them of issues and options for resolution.

The greatest number of responses to the question of who should resolve conflicts chose Session as the vehicle used to handle conflict issues. The second greatest number of responses favored a combination approach, utilizing both Session and the pastor in some role. The role of the pastor was seen as varying from acting as a mediator at meetings to handling the situations as directed by God.

**Recommendations:**

**103. The church should confront conflict. Fear of conflict leads to avoidance of conflict. Avoidance engenders an undercurrent of uncertainty and distrust and the circulation of rumors based on opinion and emotion rather than dialogue based on fact. Recommendations in the Decision Making Section (page 28) describe a variety of methods for confronting conflict.**

***E. Staffing***

Thirty-five members responded to questions about hiring and evaluating staff. Fifty percent of the responses to the question about the quality of hiring and evaluation practices indicated we have good hiring practices and evaluation practices.

The responses to the question of what the pastor does that can be done by other staff were diversified and ranged from only preaching to not having the new pastor in the Recycling Center and not involved in purchasing of office, kitchen, and other maintenance items. Several responses addressed sharing visitations and shut-in visits with ministry team members, and deacons.

The survey asked "What are some tasks being forgotten or ignored that are appropriate responsibilities for the pastor and staff?" Most responses addressed the issue of member visitations and visitations of ill and shut-ins. One respondent even mentioned a specific family and date. The second largest concern was for our youth, with responses primarily addressed to finding youth group leaders and having a youth ministry. Several responses were about routine church inspections of items such as lighting, and hardware, caution signs being posted (slippery when wet), being aware of when the use of salt is needed for icing conditions, and room conditions left after rentals. One respondent mentioned that the pastor should be tuned into noticing areas of discontent and addressing them early.

Thirty-five members responded to questions about staffing. Some members expressed a desire to add a music director (4) and increased custodial help (2). Ideas about decreasing staff were to cut in the areas of parish associate (4) and recycling (4). Additional staff positions seen as needed were a youth minister or director (8), a Christian education director (8), and a building and grounds director (4).

The Parish Associate serves at the discretion of the Pastor. This position was created to address the unique circumstances of the last few years of the former pastor's ministry.

**Recommendations:**

**104. The congregation should recognize the Parish Associate position will be dissolved with the calling of the permanent pastor.**

**105. The Discipleship Ministry Team should develop a description of the roles and responsibilities for a new position combining youth and Christian education. Such a role should be outlined in view of the current number of elementary- and junior high- children and youth, and the need identified by the congregational survey to direct more resources**

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towards Christian education for adults as well. Definition of this role will help Session determine how such a position will augment our programs. Thus, we will be in a position to prioritize the funding of this position along with other financial obligations.

106. The Worship and Music Ministry Team should seek expansion of music ministry staff positions to include wider music-related responsibilities including children and youth music ministries, the hand bell choir and coordination of special music programs throughout the year. The congregational survey indicated a strong desire to increase music opportunities, especially for youth and children. Music is viewed as an important component of worship. Staff position(s) for these responsibilities will bring a qualified person/people equipped with the needed skills and abilities to expand our music ministries in quality and quantity while providing opportunities to all.

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## SECTION 7: CONCLUSIONS

*“But the Lord says, Do not cling to events of the past or dwell on what happened long ago. Watch for the new thing I am going to do. It is happening already — you can see it now.”*

*Isaiah 43:18-19*

This Mission Study proposes a new structure for the church. The structure is envisioned as being organic, like a tree, with certain ministries being essential to the survival and growth of the church (its roots) and others constituting the work of the church once basic needs are satisfied (its branches). The tree’s growth, its bloom and fruit are metaphorical expressions of the Holy Spirit in this time and place.

One feature of this restructuring of committees, or ministries, is to place more emphasis on certain responsibilities and functions about which members have concerns: member care and property management. These functions would become the responsibilities of new ministry teams called Member Care, and Building and Grounds, respectively.

This report also draws attention to, and builds a case for, a new emphasis on developing greater spirituality and it calls upon members to discover and use their spiritual gifts to build and support the church through a Spiritual Gifts Ministry Team. Much of this work will be accomplished through relationship and communication in small groups that are the core groups of ministry. Thus, the development and nurturing of ongoing and short-term small groups for a variety of purposes is emphasized. Leadership and servanthip should become more broadly spread throughout the membership through ministry teams empowered to make important decisions. This will assure our church is faith-directed and people-led.

Finally, the thrust of this report is the church should renew its calling and message first among us. Before we can bring growth from the outside, we must first start by knowing and caring about each other as well as our Lord. We must work towards a climate of safety and love, in which communication flows, which allows for legitimate and respectful differences of opinion, and in which people renew their commitment to the church by dedicating their gifts to the work of God.

Our church will grow naturally as a reflection of God’s will for us when all of these things happen.

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### **A. Mission Statement**

The mission of First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale is to live as an open and faithful community of believers in Jesus Christ, seeking purpose, wholeness, and meaning in God through inspiring worship, humble prayerfulness, energizing fellowship, thoughtful stewardship, caring service, and compassionate regard for all people.

The graphic shown on the cover page of this report depicts a proposed “logo” for our church. It summarizes what we, as members of the First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale, dedicate ourselves to be:

**Growing in Faith, Living In Love, Serving All, Since 1875.**

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## **B. Priority Recommendations**

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The following recommendations have been identified as priorities for the future and vision of our church. Many recommendations not included in this section are appropriate for emphasis by Session, Ministry Teams and/or staff positions.

Recommendation 2: The church needs to see Christian education as a lifelong organizational responsibility and members need to accept it as a lifelong individual responsibility. Christian education is differentiated from spiritual growth; the first leads to growth in knowledge and understanding and is important in its own right. It may, but does not always, lead to spiritual growth. Additional opportunities for adult Christian education could be provided through book groups, speakers on special topics, and audiotape courses with discussion.

Recommendation 3: The church should emphasize and nurture spiritual growth as both the individual's responsibility and that of the body of Christ as a whole—through the support of individual spiritual growth plans, and the offering of spiritual growth groups and spiritual mentoring. The Evangelism Ministry Team should make available recommendations for pursuing spiritual growth and consider challenging every member to design his/her own plan for spiritual growth with a dedication Sunday for these plans.

Recommendation 13: The church should explore opportunities with the other Dimondale area churches to develop a "Community Christian Coalition", joining resources to better serve community needs. Examples of support and services that such a joint venture could address include food bank operations, senior services, junior-and senior-high youth activities, summer children's programs and Christian music concerts in the park.

Recommendation 17: Session should organize programs into a tree-like structure where: Essential program ministries serve as the root, or base, to everything we do, leadership positions provide framework and structure, as a tree trunk, to overall church mission, and action ministries act as the branches allowing us to reach, grow and serve God's call.

Recommendation 37: The Discipleship Ministry should design a comprehensive junior- and senior-high discipleship program ministry building on existing activities that gets these kids excited about God! A strong emphasis should be placed on helping our youth identify and nurture their spiritual gifts and learn how they can use their gifts toward mission and service to God's call. This is the prime time to accentuate identification and nurturing of spiritual gifts for junior- and senior-high youth, as they are beginning to prepare themselves for future academic goals and careers.

Recommendation 48: The Fellowship Ministry Team should organize a wide variety of social approaches that "offer something for everyone" several times a year. The Team should develop fellowship events that are as diversified as our membership. Activities should include church-wide events to enhance our sense of community. Fellowship activities targeted for specific age groups and common interests are also recommended.

Recommendation 102: Session should find ways to involve more members in the decision making process through the development of more opportunities for presentation of information to members and opportunities for discussion of alternatives, such as informational meetings and open forums focused on a specific issue. People need ways to express their opinions in a climate of safety and love.

Recommendation 103: The church should confront conflict. Fear of conflict leads to avoidance of conflict. Avoidance engenders an undercurrent of uncertainty and distrust and the circulation of rumors based on opinion and emotion rather than dialogue based on fact.

Communication Recommendations: The church should improve the communication process among Elders, Ministry Teams and congregational members. High priority recommendations to improve

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communications are: The pastor and parish associate, elders and deacons must find ways to be more available to hear and respond to ideas and concerns (Recommendation 85). The congregation should have some way of accessing Session minutes (Recommendation 87). Ministry Teams and Session need to do a better job of sharing information either from the pulpit or at coffee hour or at more frequent congregational meetings (Recommendation 91). Elders must be more visible and accessible. Elders' names and pictures could be linked to the ministry team each leads and the responsibilities of the team. Elders should speak from the pulpit occasionally and be visibly available during coffee hour (Recommendation 95).

Recycling Center Recommendations: A series of recommendations pertaining to the Recycling Center are included in Section 5.K of this report. Highlights of these recommendations include: continued operation of the Recycling Center, increasing internal awareness of the tangible and intangible benefits of the Center, using the Recycling Center as a "Welcome Center" for the church, and promoting volunteerism to provide "Weekend Hosts" for the Center.

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## SECTION 8: APPENDICES

### **A. Church History 1975-2002**

The goal of this history of the years 1975 to 2002 at First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale is to complete the history of the church to the end of the ministry of Reverend John Toth. The years 1875 to 1975 were chronicled in a history of the church written by John Toth with the assistance of Kathy Caruss and included in the church directory published for the centennial year of 1975.

Prior to the calling of John Toth to fill the pulpit of First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale, in 1969, a total of 38 ministers had served the church over the 127 year period since its founding in 1875. Until the 1940s the church was a "mission" church, supported by Presbytery rather than being self-supporting. Perhaps that partially explains the fact that the average tenure for the pastor had been only 2.5 years. Thus the ministry of John Toth was unique to the history of the church, covering a span of 33 years. The longest previous ministerial tenure of Pastor Harold McKinney in 1952-1961 had been nine years. During Reverend Toth's pastorate, the world, the community, and the church changed dramatically. The stability of having a long term minister provided the opportunity to plan for the future. Among the major changes for the church were the purchase of additional property, major improvements to the building, major improvements to the music program as the result of funds that had been acquired through the Martin Memorial endowment, the establishment of a Recycling Center serving as an informal mission of the church and producing income that sponsored many significant improvements in facilities and programs. These changes are outlined below.

During Reverend Toth's tenure, the church made buying adjacent land a priority. The Sabin property lay within 3 feet of the rear wall of the church. In 1970 the church purchased this property and the adjacent lot. At first the old Sabin house was rented, but then the church set up a cooperative nursery there sponsored by the church but with its own board, called the Dimondale Cooperative Nursery. The nursery, nonprofit and self-supporting, operated until 1984 when the building was demolished to make way for the new addition that the church later added.

The lot next to the Barrix property was purchased in the mid 1970s and is now used as the church's back drive and parking lot. Both this purchase and the Sabin property purchase were made with funds borrowed from the Martin Memorial Fund which had been established in 1944. Then in 1998 the Barrix double lot property was purchased and the Snow property in 2001, both again with funds borrowed from the Martin Memorial Fund. In each case the purpose was to facilitate church expansion if needed at a later date.

In 1976 the church bell was removed from the steeple because of concern about the sturdiness of the church's tower due to the 1000 pound weight of the bell. To house the bell for historic preservation, a bell house endowed by the Burnett family was built at the front of the church. Also that year the church was given an historical marker to commemorate its 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. Insulation became an early project under Reverend Toth's leadership because the church building had never been insulated. Installing insulation and vinyl siding provided such a huge energy savings that this improvement paid for itself in five years.

In anticipation of population growth in the Windsor Township area, in 1984 the church began to plan and raise funds for church expansion under the leadership of chairs Harry Adams and Jim Murton. The total cost of the building project, \$560,000, was raised with funding from the General Assembly, the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, the Synod of the Covenant, local sponsors, and bank loans as well as a grant from the Granger Foundation. In 1988 church members broke ground for an expansion that doubled the size of the building, which was redesigned by architects so that the sanctuary was re-oriented towards the west. A new steeple was placed on the church tower with funds donated by Robert Swart in honor of Rosie Swart. The dedication of the expansion took place with ceremony and celebration that fall. The program of the church was enhanced by this addition of the new great room, new offices, and a new kitchen, among other improvements.

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Other building improvements occurring during Reverend Toth's pastorate included the installation of new front doors in a Celtic cross pattern, designed by Steve Parisian and John Toth and built by Steve Parisian in 1975, the installation of awnings on the new main doors and back doors in 1991, and the addition of a new wooden cross at the front of the sanctuary designed and built by member Roy Schnepf with wood from the Hettrick farm as a memorial for member Marian Hettrick. In 2002 an historic flagpole, originally on the Mackinac Bridge when it was built in 1957, was placed in the side yard of the church and dedicated to Reverend John Toth on the occasion of his retirement.

In 1946 Elta Jay and Gertrude E. Martin, who were not residents of our community but interested in helping churches to buy carillons, wanted to give the church a carillon in memory of his parents, Samuel and Sarah Ann Martin. Their generosity led to the endowment of 155 shares of Gerber Foods common stock for the church's music program. The endowment has served as a source of income for the church and funding for special projects since that time, though the company was bought out by the Sandoz Corporation in recent years and the endowment reinvested in other securities. The original carillon installed with Martin Memorial funding in the early 1940s was a keyboard at the organ. A volunteer played 5 minutes of songs daily at 6 P.M. The carillon was upgraded in the early 1970s to an automatic system that used sealed tapes and upgraded again in late 1990s to the current system with funding from the sale of Gerber stock. The Martin Memorial Fund also purchased a Baldwin organ for the church and, in the late 1990s, an electronic keyboard.

When Reverend Toth first came in 1969, there was no pastor's office and no secretary. All rooms were used for Sunday School and volunteers staffed the church. Later his wife, Joanne Toth, was appointed the church's first paid part-time secretary, a position she held until her retirement with that of Reverend Toth in 2002. When Reverend John Toth first came, the church had a history of being a small, part-time church with a miniscule budget. The goal of achieving 200 members was achieved in 1977 and membership has remained stable since that time. Another change during the Toth era was a transition from casual to planned giving both of individual members and of the church as a body to mission. Members increasingly gave permanent endowments to the Presbyterian Foundation. In 2001 the church began a Brazilian Mission Project by sponsoring the work of Reverend Paulo Brasil, a seminary classmate of John Toth. Reverend Brasil visited the church several times to talk about his mission to youth at Youth Set Free Ministry, Mata Grosso, in the forests of Brazil.

Reverend Toth led two trips of church members and friends to the Holy Land, in 1972 and 1980. In 1975 he presided over the church's celebration of its Centennial Year. That was also the year that the first church directory, containing a history of the church to that date, was published. Church directories have followed in 1981, 1985, 1990, and 2000. In 1994 and again in 1995 the church celebrated the paying off of its loans from the National Bank of Detroit and the General Assembly respectively. Another addition during the Toth years was the purchase in 1993 of a new nativity scene for the Christmas season largely with gifts from members of the congregation. In 1996 a second, more contemporary service was instituted to attract unchurched people of the community and continued until 1998. In 2000 church members enjoyed a 125th year celebration of First Presbyterian with a church banquet. Also that year the church retained its first parish associate, Reverend Lee Filker, to provide additional support for the work of ministry.

A new project in which Reverend John Toth took the initiative in 1974 was that of recycling. The Girl Scout troop sponsored by the church had begun collecting glass for recycling. The Girl Scouts kept barrels of glass in the church until they started to meet in the new Junior High School and left their glass project in Dimondale. At that point the church took over glass collection. The church had already been collecting newspapers in the garage of the former Sabin house next door to help send children to camp. Reverend Toth himself had received a camp scholarship as a child, making this an important cause to him. He had noticed when he came in 1969 that no children or youth of the church were going to church camp. He started taking Junior High youth to a camp and asked the church for financial help. Lake Michigan Presbytery's Camp Greenwood was rejuvenated in the early 1970s and children and youth of the church were encouraged to go. While some members gave money for scholarships, the start-up of recycling around 1974 provided monies that could be used for camp scholarships, with the

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size of the scholarship depending on the money available and the number of children who wanted to go. Thus began a tradition of giving children and youth of the church a 50 percent camp scholarship, which more recently became a 100 percent scholarship (minus cost of registration).

The environmental movement was in its infancy at this time; thus conservation and recycling became an emphasis of the youth group. Though the church began the work of recycling around 1974, records were not kept until 1978, which was the official start of the church's recycling project. Soon the project became too big to store materials in the church itself and the Sabin house and the church began to use a bin under the pine trees. In 1978 it built a garage for newspapers and a shed for glass. A grant from the state enabled the church to buy a trailer that was placed at the mobile home park and monitored by several church members. In 1988 the church was forced to re-site the trailer so it was moved to church property at the time that the new building was under construction. The garage was moved to where it stands today and the church received permission to use the Masonic driveway for recycling traffic. The Recycling Center expanded into plastics and bought a plastic bailer with contributions from the Township, Eaton County, the Village and the Lions. With the Village's contribution the Recycling Center received formal recognition as a project and the center continued to increase the volume handled and processed right up to the time of Reverend Toth's retirement in 2002. In 1990 John Toth was recognized as an "earth angel" by a local radio station and in 1992 Channel 6 recognized Reverend Toth and the recycling volunteers as "unsung heroes". The church turned to employing more paid staff in recent years when the number of volunteers dropped while the volume of recyclable materials continued to increase annually.

John Toth was instrumental both in enhancing the financial stability of the church and in restoring the financial credibility of Camp Greenwood. The Recycling Center brought an additional source of income to the church, which has been used over the years not only to provide camp scholarships for children and youth but also to finance needed repairs to the parking lot and infrastructure of the church, finance many program expenses, and to support many benevolent groups that have sought funding from the church. For Camp Greenwood, Reverend Toth served as a commissioner, chair of the Camp Greenwood Agency for several years, and member of the Camp Greenwood Task Force. In those roles key he was instrumental in bringing fiscal responsibility to the organization assisted by Joanne Toth, who brought better record keeping as Camp Greenwood's volunteer secretary and registrar.

The church has been and remains a community-centered church. Historically the building has been made available to community groups for meetings, including those of the Lions Club, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Girl Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, and many community, village, and township organizations. When people around town talk about a meeting as being at "the church", everyone knows what that means. As the sponsor of a Boy Scout troop and a Cub Scout troop, the pastor is the executive officer of the troop and signed their charter. Early in his ministry John Toth was asked to be involved in organizing the community's traditional Memorial Day and continued as its marshal until his retirement. Church member Mike Chappell started a Memorial Day chicken barbeque sponsored by the church in the 1970s that has also become a community tradition. The church has always provided emergency aid and church committees started to collect food and stockpile it for an emergency Food Bank to serve the entire community. For many years the church also coordinated local Meals on Wheels deliveries. The Presbyterian Women's organization of the church organized and hosted the Windsor Township Retirees until they organized on their own. This group continues to meet at the church. As noted above, at one time the church sponsored a cooperative nursery that served community members. In recent years it has alternated with Dimondale Methodist Church in providing a Good Friday service for the community. Dimondale residents call the First Presbyterian Church "the community church" and a good neighbor.

Other practices and traditions at First Presbyterian associated with the leadership of John Toth have included the Baptismal candle, art in the church, communion around the table at the longstanding Maundy Thursday service, and a men's breakfast/Bible study at Mike's Village Restaurant. Wonderful Wednesdays grew out of Vacation Bible School in the 1980s and became Terrific Tuesdays in 2001. The Young Adults Group of the 1960s and early 1970s evolved into a couples group and then Pairs and Spares. Easter breakfast was originally a community event but became a church project when the

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church started having two services on Easter Sunday. The food has been prepared by Ed Dixon and his family for many years.

The Presbyterian Women have historically been very active. In the 1960s the group began circles for Bible study and provided nursery care. It started organizing an annual bazaar of holiday crafts in the late 1960s which has remained a very successful fund raising event. Presbyterian Women has a mission of serving and providing spiritual and informational programs, including the Lenten breakfast which it began in the mid 1980s. As elsewhere, the role of Presbyterian Women has changed as more women became employed outside the home. Thus, at times it has functioned as a coordination team, but has nonetheless remained visibly active in support of the programs of the church. While the program of the youth group has varied depending on the number of youth in that age group, it has also flourished at times under the leadership of advisors including John Toth, Kathy Caruss, Barb and Tim Lowe, and many others. The Church's Sunday School program has remained strong and dedicated to nurturing the children and adults of the church under the leadership of volunteer Christian educators. The Christian education director became a paid position in the 1980s.

First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale has been distinguished for its active participation in the affairs of Presbytery. Members who have participated in various Presbytery committees and commissions over the years include Kathy Caruss, Garnet Chappell, Lee Filker, Barbara Lowe, Marianna Malkowski, Nolan Mitchell, Jim Murton, John Toth, and Bill York. John Toth served on the Synod Commission 1976-79 and 1986-88, Chair Synod Planning Commission 1973-79, Synod Development Commission 1983, Camp Greenwood 1980-82 and 1984-85, Media Commission 1983, Permanent Judicial Commission 1991-94, and Camp Greenwood Task Force 1986-88. Kathy Caruss, Nolan Mitchell, and John Toth all served as Commissioners to General Assembly. Kathy Caruss, Jim Murton, and Bill York served as moderators of the Presbytery committees of Ministry, Worship and Music, and Budget and Finance, respectively, and both John Toth and Kathy Caruss have been vice-moderators and moderators of Presbytery.

In summary, during the years of John Toth's ministry to the people of First Presbyterian Church of Dimondale, the church grew in membership, programs and service to members and community, and in its spiritual life. It grew physically, in giving, and in support of meeting the needs of peoples in the congregation, the community, and the world. Reverend John Toth led 33 years of worship and service and was honored upon his retirement for his devotion to the word of God and life in Christ and his service to the congregation and community throughout a period of challenge and change.

With special thanks to Kathy Caruss, Marianna Malkowski, and John Toth who provided information for this brief history.

Compiled by: Susan M. York

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***B. Natural Church Development Survey Results***

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**C. Congregation Demographic Data**

	1993	2002	2003	% Change (1993-2003)
<b>Membership</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>206</b>	
-24 yrs	24 = 11.3%	20 = 9.6	18 = 8.7%	- 2.6%
26-35 yrs	64 = 30.0%	10 = 4.8	16 = 7.8%	- 22.2%
36-55 yrs	31 = 14.6%	61 = 29.3	56 = 27.2%	+ 12.6%
56-64 yrs	21 = 9.9%	49 = 23.6	36 = 17.5%	+ 7.6%
65+ yrs	73 = 34.3%	68 = 32.7	80 = 38.8%	+ 4.5%
(85+) yrs			(15 = 7.3%)	
Gender Ratio M/F	81/132	67/141		-5.8%/+ 5.8%
Disabled		10		
Nonwhite	6 = 2.8%	3 = 1.61%		- 1.2%
Average Attendance	120 = 56.3%	131 = 62.5%		+ 6.2%
Church School Enrollment	24	63		+ 162.5%
<b>Education</b> - Based on 83 congregational survey responses with 25 yrs & under underrepresented and 56-64 yrs over-represented.				
Less than HS			4.8%	
HS Diploma			18.1%	
Some Col/Tech			26.5%	
Asso Degree			14.5%	
BA			15.7%	
Some Grad/Prof			20.9%	
<b>Family Income</b> - Based on 83 congregational survey responses with 25 yrs & under underrepresented and 56-64 yrs over-represented.				
Under \$15,000			11.7%	
\$15,000-\$24,999			11.7%	
\$25,000-\$34,999			23.3%	
\$35,000-\$49,999			31.7%	
\$50,000-\$74,999			8.3%	
\$75,000-\$99,999			11.7%	
\$100,000-\$149,999			1.7%	
\$150,000 +			0%	
<b>Occupations</b> - Based on 80 congregational survey responses with 25 yrs & underrepresented and 56-64 yrs over-represented.				
Const, Extrac, & Maint			2.5%	
Prod, Trans, & Materials Moving			5%	
Service			15%	
Sales & Office			22.5%	
Management, Prof & Related			40%	
Farming, Fishing & Forestry			0%	
<b>Pledging</b>				
General & Bldg Fund	\$81,231	\$143,954		+ 177.2%
Giving Units		128		
Average Pledge/Unit		\$1124.60		
<b>Average Driving Distance from Home to Church</b>			3.4 miles	

**D. Community Demographic Data**

	1990	2000	% of Change
<b>Population</b>	<b>6460</b>	<b>7340</b>	<b>+13.6%</b>
Median Age		42	
Age Groups			
0-19 yrs	1864	1958	+ 5%
20-24 yrs	228	263	+ 15.4%
25-44 yrs	2052	1865	- 9.1%
45-54 yrs	877	1354	+54.4%
55-64 yrs	567	803	+41.6%
65-84 yrs	736	936	+27.2%
85 yrs	136	161	+ 18.4%
Number of Households	2251	2781	+ 23.5%
Adult Disabled Population		17.6%	
Nonwhite Population	2.8%	6.4%	+ 3.6%
Population by Gender M/F	3157/3303 49%/51%	3500/3722 49%/51%	
<b>Education - Adults 25 and older</b>	<b>4375</b>	<b>5008</b>	
Less than High Sch	635 = 14.5%	530 = 10.6%	- 3.9%
HS Diploma	1335 = 30.5%	1565 = 31.3%	+ .8%
Some Col/Tech	1108 + 25.3%	1352 = 27.0%	+ 1.7%
Associates Degree	560 = 12.8	515 = 10.3%	- 2.5%
BA	573 = 13.1%	738 = 14.7%	+ 1.6%
Some Grad/Prof	164 = 3.7%	308 = 6.1%	+ 2.4%
<b>Household Income</b>			
Mean		\$62,795	
Median	41,005	\$57,793	
Less than \$10,000	119	64	- 46.2%
\$10,000-\$14,999	165	95	- 42.4%
\$15,000-\$24,999	267	287	+ 7.5%
\$25,000-\$34,999	372	244	- 34.4%
\$35,000-\$49,999	455	445	- 2.1%
\$50,000-\$74,999	636	775	+ 21.9%
\$75,000-\$99,999	194	461	+ 137.6%
\$100,000-\$149,999	23	295	+ 1182.6%
\$150,000 +	14	68	+ 385.7%
<b>Occupations</b>			
Construction, Extraction & Maint; Prod, Trans & Materials Moving	750 = 23.5%	991 = 27.5%	+ 4.0%
Service	418 = 13.1%	375 = 10.4%	- 2.7%
Sales & Office	1129 = 35.3%	1130 = 31.3%	- 4.0%
Mgmt, Professional & Related	858 = 26.8%	1113 = 30.8%	+ 4.0%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	41 = 1.3%	1 = .03%	- 1.3%

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***E. Ten Year Trends Congregational Statistics***