

Community in Christ, Presbyterian Mission Study



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The Past

Community in Christ, Presbyterian began as a vision. In 1963, a study concerning future population growth in southeast Guilford County led to the purchase of a 21-acre chicken farm in 1965 by the Greensboro Area Presbyterian Churches. This chicken farm was given to Orange Presbytery, who in 1969 commissioned Rev. Angus McGregor to found a new church in the area. In December 1971, Community in Christ, Presbyterian was chartered with a congregation of 109 members.

From its beginning, the development of Community in Christ, Presbyterian was tied to the development of the Forest Oaks neighborhood with the majority of its members over the years residing in the neighborhood. Many feel that the outside reputation of the church is still tied to the neighborhood and the Forest Oaks Country Club as it once was. However, others feel that the church is now invisible to the neighborhood, with many either not realizing the church exists or not knowing that the buildings house a church. At one time, the Forest Oaks Country Club did host a major golf tournament and the neighborhood was understood to be wealthy/upper-middle-class. Now the neighborhood is in social and economic transition with long-term residents aging out and from the lack of economic development in the area. The golf tournament is no longer held at the Country Club. The Club itself is currently in transition moving toward a fitness and health center and away from the social concept of a Country Club. Development in Greensboro occurred more in the northwest than in the southeast corner. On the rural border, the area surrounding the church is primarily residential.

Periods of growth and decline in membership have coincided with companies transferring employees in and out of Greensboro. As a whole, the church has been relatively stable since its inception and never grew in membership to a point where the overall culture of the church grew away from many of its founding ideas. Although official membership shows a peak of over three hundred at one point, it is understood that this reflects more a lack in membership roll maintenance than real worshipping membership. While other churches in the area have grown in size, the numbers at Community in Christ, Presbyterian reflects the type of ministry practiced by the congregation.

When Rev. Angus McGregor began, the idea behind the church was to start something entirely different. From its inception, this congregation was going to be the alternative to the other churches of the day. Ahead of its time in many ways, the developing congregation sought to reach out and involve people who were not active in church. Although ruled by Presbyterian polity, this was not to be yet another Presbyterian church using the model of the day.

Stylistically that meant innovations like a more relaxed worship experience with coffee and doughnuts. There was also the idea of sermons being more interactive, promoting discussion and debate. Even a Youth-oriented Coffee House was tried at one time. The spirit of the church was to be open-ended with no given assumptions. As such, there has always been an underlying experimental nature to the church. In a video made for the congregation's Fortieth Anniversary, Rev. McGregor described that early congregation as a "group of people willing to investigate Jesus Christ and its implications for community." The name of the fledgling congregation itself, Community in Christ, Presbyterian, best describes the spiritual intentions of not starting another church, but gathering together a community.

When the time came to build, this same alternative understanding was put into the church's design. While a few may bemoan that the building itself doesn't look like a church, that was the original intention. Again, being ahead of its time, the building seeks to reflect a sense of harmony with the surrounding environment. The original design of the central building was meant to be functional, eliminating pews and a permanent chancel area. Chairs and other worship space elements can be and are encouraged to be rearranged to best suit the needs of the worship. Even the name of the space, forgoing the word "sanctuary" for "the Centrum," reflects its purpose and alternative spirit. Having clear windows rather than stained glass windows reflects intentional thinking about how the worship space should not separate us from the outside world, but should keep us open and mindful of the world where our collective faith leads.

Rev. McGregor left Community in Christ, Presbyterian in 1977. He was followed by Rev. Jim Rissmiller, who would serve the congregation until 2001. When Rev. Rissmiller came to the congregation he reflected who the members of the congregation were at the time; young and raising a family. During this time, the life of the church mirrored much of the life of the congregation. This was a time of baptisms and weddings with very few funerals. There would be church campouts and more involvement in local youth sports as the members of the congregation raised their families together. During this period in its life, the church was active with lots of energy. Tight friendships developed and while the congregation grew to its largest membership numbers during this longer time, the emphasis on relationships likely, although unintentionally, kept the church the size that it was while some nearby churches grew much larger. Community in Christ, Presbyterian had become a family-oriented community church. Even the expansion of the building reflected the new family ministry needs of the congregation. What would eventually become the Preschool was begun during this time as a Mother's Morning Out

program. Although some of the alternative elements of worship were lost over time, worship intentionally remained dynamic and central to the life of the congregation.

Upon the retirement of Rev. Rissmiller, Rev. McGregor returned as the interim minister in 2001. This eighteen month period changed the momentum of the congregation. After twenty-five years, Rev. McGregor was returning to a congregation that was more settled and while there were still echoes of the founding spirit of the congregation, this was a different church than the one he had left. While debate and discussion of contemporary social issues were virtues in the congregation in the early 1970's, at this very polarized time in the culture they worked only to create conflict. Strong in his own political and theological outlook, Rev. McGregor was out of step with many in the congregation who consequently left the church during this interim period, never to return. The lasting wound from this time was the loss of several young families, leaving more the core congregation as older members who had finished raising their children. Later, the cleaning of membership records between 2002 and 2003 took membership from just below three hundred members in 2002 down to about one hundred and fifty members in 2003. Again, while much of this number reflects the poor quality in keeping accurate membership numbers, it also reflects the state of the church after Rev. Rissmiller's retirement and Rev. McGregor's term as interim.

Once again, the congregation called a minister who reflected who they were at that point in their lives. Rev. Fred Beck was an older, second career minister who had been a former professor of music. Not surprisingly, Rev. Beck brought his gift in music into his tenure as pastor. He served for a time as the choir director and brought in different forms of music to the congregation. His bluegrass group Presby Opia would play on different occasions. "Quiet," "peaceful," "spiritual," "transformational," and "meditative" are all words that would describe

what Rev. Beck sought to bring to Community in Christ, Presbyterian. From the Fortieth Anniversary video, Rev. Beck reflecting back on his accomplishments cited monthly chapel services for the preschool and the introduction of Healing and Wholeness services as two of his more important accomplishments during his time in ministry at Community in Christ, Presbyterian. Reflecting the values of the core congregation, three accomplishments of the congregation during these years were paying off the mortgage, constructing a Columbarium, and establishing an endowment fund for future ministries. There was little change to the church during this time in either institutional structure or membership. Both were maintained well; but with diminishing results. Funerals increased. Age and health became more of an issue for the congregation. However, at the same time, there was a strengthening to the Children's and Youth ministry. New Youth were becoming a part of the church's life through a solid relational-style youth ministry led by a long-term member of the church. Youth who either did not attend another church or felt alienated from their own church combined with the few Youth who were a part of the congregation. While there was a natural growth in anxiety for the aging congregation's future, the Spirit was planting seeds for that future. In 2012, Rev. Beck retired.

The Present

Leadership/Organization Structure

The current organizational structure at Community in Christ, Presbyterian was put into place during Rev. McGregor's interim period as the congregation worked to move from a pastor-led church model toward a programmatic church model. The concept is a simple variation on the committee structure as normally found in a Presbyterian church. Different sub-committees are appropriately grouped under three larger headings: Community Life, Community Stewardship,

and Community Outreach. Each community meets monthly. Currently serving Ruling Elders provide oversight/input by serving in one of the three communities. Elders are not required to be the chair of a community or of any of the sub-committees. Session receives monthly reports from the three communities and acts on items felt necessary for Session approval. Each community also provides an overview report for the yearly congregational meeting.

The strength of the current structure is that communities do meet on a regular monthly basis. Each meeting allows for a wide range of input from congregation members. Participation in communities and sub-committees comes simply through attendance. There are no roadblocks for full committee participation by anyone active in the congregation. With this structure, new ideas from individual congregation members are able to be heard, be voted upon by the community and then become a part of the life of the church. The communities also do well at maintaining the month to month tasks of the congregation year in and year out.

As with any committee structure, a negative to the current organization is the lack of participation in some of the sub-committees. Some sub-committees are down to the work of just one person. While all are welcome to participate, as often happens, participation dwindles to a low percentage of the congregation often with leadership/participants in committees overlapping with the same people. Committee enthusiasm and interest can also vary. Since the communities are where much of the work of the church is either done or planned, the energy of each community has a large effect on the life of the church. When there is enthusiasm and energy in a community, the church as a whole can come alive. When communities are focused on maintenance and operate without much short or long term vision, the church slows down.

Another drawback to this structure is that it was put into place during a time when the congregation was making a concerted effort at moving from a pastor-led congregation to a

programmatic congregation. The problem is that transition never fully occurred over the years and was likely the wrong idea for this congregation. Its congregational size and history point to Community in Christ, Presbyterian being a pastor-led congregation. The effect over the years of an unsuccessful management transition has been to create a lack of clear vision for the congregation because leadership has been overly diffused. While the communities do good work and create openings for new ideas to find life, their work is not directed toward any larger organizational or spiritual goal. Activities are often repeated year after year and while there is an opening for new ideas, old and repeated ideas tend to sap much of the community's energy. For a congregation that was founded as an alternative and an experiment, this trend moves the congregation away from its best spirit. Without a larger, wider vision to unify the church's work, enthusiasm, excitement and energy are slowly drained from the congregation.

The current organizational structure has also had an effect on the role of Session. Notes from Session retreats from 2005 to 2011 often reveal the same topics of conversation but little action to follow up on those conversations. One year it appears the Session retreat was cancelled for lack of business. Another year notes, "Pointed out the importance of trusting our committees and divisions [communities], with the Session simply voting on recommendations and asking questions." This comment best describes the tacit role Session has adopted. Each community is capable of making decisions and providing oversight for its area of interest. Session hears reports. Many items that come before Session are unnecessary and often could have been handled by one of the communities had someone in the community not wanted Session to be involved. In the current structure, outside of certain Book of Order mandates, the Session operates almost as a superfluous fourth community with the real work of the congregation being done through the other three communities.

The growing edge for leadership is to reinvigorate and reassert the role of Session and embrace being a smaller, pastor-led congregation. Moving Session from a role of oversight to developing and implementing a larger vision with clearly stated goals for the congregation would give the current organizational structure the energy and focus it needs. The diffused leadership style of a programmatic structure is a mismatch for this congregation. However, the mechanics of the community organizational structure does not need to be reorganized. Reorganization of the existing structure would only work to waste energy and resources. The congregation already knows how to work through the existing organizational structure. The role of Session becomes twofold. One would be the creation of a focused and clear vision of what the church wants to accomplish. The Session creates the “why” but then leaves most of the “how” to the work of the communities. For example, the Session may discern a larger goal for more involvement by the men of the congregation. Creating more open-ended goals for the church allows the community strength of introducing new ideas to work. Community Life may propose a short-term discussion group focusing on Jesus’ parables and how/if they are relevant to the real life of men today. Community Outreach may see a new Habitat for Humanity build as an opportunity for the men of the church to come together to build fellowship and exercise their faith. The two ideas might then be combined as a way to meet the larger goal set by the Session. The second role of the Session would be as co-spiritual leaders with the pastor. Like many congregations, Community in Christ, Presbyterian has very low expectations for the spiritual leadership of its Ruling Elders. Although this congregation works best as a pastor-led congregation, instead of conceding leadership over to an individual the Session understands itself as pastor of the congregation. As such, Session members lead in worship, create small prayer groups, meet monthly as a Session for Biblical/theological study and fellowship, and visit those in need.

Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and Adult Education

Children and Youth rank high in congregational ministry priorities.

The half-day Preschool program is a ministry of the congregation and not a separate entity that uses the buildings. A Preschool committee oversees the program on behalf of the congregation. This program has been in place for decades and has influenced a generation of local children. A scholarship now exists through the church for high school graduates who graduated from the Preschool. The success of this program is found not only in the children who have been loved and cared for through the years in the Preschool; but also in the steady group of teachers who, despite low pay and uncertain yearly employment, have dedicated themselves to the program. The teacher turnover rate is incredibly low with at least two teachers having been a part of the program for over nineteen years. The program is well-organized and stable.

Financially, the program depends on the numbers enrolled. With the downturn in the economy and the rise in preschool options from the public schools, enrollment has been down not only in the preschool at Community in Christ, Presbyterian but also in other local church preschools. The program does not receive any direct monies from the church budget; but gives money monthly to offset building/utilities costs incurred by the program. The Preschool operates on a zero-sum budget.

With the Preschool, the growing edge is always in enrollment. Over the years, the program has alternatively been filled to capacity and so low the survival of the program is a concern. The program is reaching out with two week-long summer camps this year in an effort to attract new children to the program. The growing edge for the congregation concerning the Preschool is to fully embrace the program as a ministry of the church. Again, while not a separate entity from the church, in the past the program has been treated almost as such. The

Preschool program is underutilized for evangelism though over the years several families have found their way into the congregation through the program. The congregation would only benefit from a yearly Preschool Sunday that celebrated the program and gave recognition to the work of the teachers.

Children's ministry consists mostly of Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Because of the number of children in the congregation at this time, Sunday School is composed of mixed ages in one room. Teachers try to match lessons to coincide either with the church calendar or with the lectionary lesson being done in worship that morning. Vacation Bible School typically reaches out and brings children in from the community who do not otherwise attend the church. Children's ministry also works to connect the children with the worship life of the church. Children actively participate in weekly worship announcements, as acolytes, and in the Moment for Children. Artwork and pictures from activities decorate the walls of the church. Children at Community in Christ, Presbyterian are welcome to be children. There is a casual intergenerational spirit that gives the message that this is a nurturing spiritual home for all ages.

The growing edge for the Children's ministry is dependent on the growing numbers of children in the church. New Family ministry programs might look to the past to rediscover the importance of church camping trips or other fellowship/relational building activities. A children's music program may want to be developed to provide another point of participation in worship. It may also be beneficial as part of a larger church vision to create specific learning goals for the children of the church.

The Youth ministry at Community in Christ, Presbyterian is separated by age into College/High School and Middle School groups and operates on a relational model. During the

school year, youth meet weekly on Wednesdays - Middle School and then College/High School. Much of the time is free. A few activities may be planned, but, for the most part, the time is spent coming together and hanging out. Youth eat, play and talk. Planned activities are often “other”-focused, such as making cards for people being delivered Meals on Wheels, or planning for a specific mission project (Easter egg hunt, providing for Parents’ Night Out, etc). Other activities may be relevant to the church calendar. Still the core of the program is the relationships between the youth and the long-term youth leader. These relationships are the core strength of the program and can last long after the time in Youth comes to an end. During the summer, there are two retreats for the oldest youth and a Youth Sunday in worship that is generally connected to the theological theme of the summer. For example, this summer’s theme is S.O.S (Summer of Service) and all the Youth will be participating in several small service projects. Like the Children’s ministry, the Youth ministry does well at integrating the Youth into different areas of congregational life stressing the importance of being intergenerational. In recent discernment meetings, the Youth cited being intergenerational as a value they would want to see increase even more. Much of the current Youth understand the congregation in family terms. Currently there are thirteen youth engaged in Confirmation. Each Confirmand has been assigned a Mentor from the congregation. This has expanded relationships with the congregation. On those Wednesday nights when a whole congregation Fellowship dinner or other event is planned, the Youth become a part of the larger event rather than staying separate. Specific fellowship events have been planned to bring the generations together, such as a recent dinner where the Youth helped the older members of the congregation how to better use their smart phones, tablets, and computers. .

The positive aspects of a relational Youth ministry are the closeness and the personal nature of the ministry being done. The current Youth leader has built a high level of trust with many of the Youth and has the maturity to walk with them through some of the difficult challenges they may be facing in their young lives. Much of her work goes unseen as a steady, non-judgmental, but guiding adult voice through telephone calls and text messages. As a result, a number of Youth participating in the current Youth program are from outside of the congregation, either not having a church home with their family and coming because they feel welcomed here or having a different church home, but not feeling as if they fit in at the church where their parent(s) attend(s). Friends invite friends. The unavoidable flipside to a relational Youth ministry program is that Youth relationships with one another can be highly volatile and when there is a falling out among Youth, the program can suffer. The other negative of such a ministry is when the Youth leader leaves so does much of the ministry because it was grounded on that relationship. It can often take Youth programs years to recover. Keeping this in mind, the growing edge for Youth ministry at Community in Christ, Presbyterian would be to create a parallel programmatic piece to the current Youth program that neither took away from nor competed with the existing ministry; but served as an outgrowth of the strong ministry already being done. This may also be able to include those Youth for whom the relational model currently does not work. When the current Youth leader, who has been leading the Youth program for a decade, decides that she needs to pull back, the parallel program could then become primary and Youth ministry could continue in a form with which the Youth would already be familiar.

Adult Education at Community in Christ, Presbyterian is limited. Second Hour (the regular Sunday School time after worship) is currently a pastor led Bible study. Women of the

church have opportunities for learning during Presbyterian Women and a Women's Bible Study that takes place on Friday mornings. A freeform theological class on Tuesday nights also led by the pastor rounds out the current opportunities. The growing edge is there in adult education for short-term small group studies, a Men's Group, a Youth Bible study, a Parent/Child Bible study, etc.

Worship

There is one worship service at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday morning ranging in attendance from sixty to ninety people. Generally speaking, the service is a relaxed traditional service open to experimentation and a variety of music and participants. While there is comfort with a longstanding basic order of worship, variety in worship is nevertheless celebrated and encouraged. The chairs of the Centrum can be rearranged without stress. Banners made throughout the life of the church are enjoyed as they are hung at appropriate times of the year. The order of service can change without complaint or confusion. Special services outside of Sunday mornings are well attended.

Because of its alternative roots, the congregation has avoided much of the worship war between traditional and contemporary that has divided other congregations. At one time there was a worship band. There is an organ that is loved. Currently, the piano is the primary instrument in worship, but that may change as different talents present themselves. Both the Presbyterian Hymnal and Sing the Faith are employed as resources for congregational singing. Music can be provided by the choir, solo singers or instrumentalists. Individual members of the congregation, both young and old, are encouraged and supported in sharing their gifts. Music is offered to the glory of God and is presented with different levels of proficiency to the same enthusiasm and appreciation of the worshipping congregation.

The service is primarily pastor led. Some Sundays a liturgist helps lead worship when someone volunteers. The liturgist has become another point of participation for the Youth in the life of the church, but is not exclusive to the Youth.

The normal order of service encourages participation beyond singing from the congregation. The Moment with the Children will often engage the whole congregation. The Prayers of the People is fully participatory with members praying aloud; lifting different people and situations in prayer as the Spirit moves them. Communion is served at least once a month. In Communion, small groups of the congregation are led forward by the elders and form a circle around the communion table. The elements are then passed around the circle each person serving the person next to them - young, old, friend, stranger, spouse, child, parent. The small group passes the peace and, holding hands, receives a blessing before returning to their seat and the next group is led forward. Communion illustrates again the underlying bonds of this congregation and how easily the congregation welcomes and makes room for new people to join the community. Even with this powerful and unique celebration of Communion as the congregation's longstanding tradition, members are still open to different forms of celebrating Communion and do so without complaint or stress.

The growing edge of worship is in maintaining the openness to the different workings of the Spirit through different forms of worship. It would be a significant loss to the richness of this church if this openness were lost. The congregation might also be served in reaching back into its history and starting a second worship service primarily focused on outreach to those who are disconnected from the church and are looking for an alternative. This service could work as a laboratory for exploring alternative forms of worship for the disaffected Christian today.

Outreach/Mission

Mission to the surrounding community has been a piece of Community in Christ, Presbyterian since it was founded. The congregation was influential in the creation of the Presbyterian Counseling Center. Early in its history, this congregation also connected with the work of Greensboro Urban Ministry (G.U.M.). Support is still being given to G.U.M. through constant food drives at the church. The church continues to be the starting site for a yearly CROP Hunger Walk that also supports G.U.M. At this time, the church is very connected to the Pathways Center, a transitional housing ministry of the Greensboro Urban Ministry. Twice a year, a group from Community in Christ, Presbyterian prepares and serves a meal at Pathways. Diapers and other necessary items for the temporary residents of Pathways are consistently being collected. During Christmas, the congregation buys presents for child residents designated by Pathways. This summer, the Youth's Summer of Service will focus primarily on work done at the Pathways Center. At the beginning of the school year, school supplies are collected for the children of the center.

While the focus of ministry with Pathways may sound as though it consists only of collecting various goods for giving, the connection at Pathways is allowing for more and more personal contact in the congregation's outreach. This year, Outreach has moved from financial outreach through budgeted financial support for different organizations toward greater personal involvement and connection. In part, this refocus is a necessary byproduct of the congregation's current financial situation. However, this is also a theological refocus and an understanding that outreach needs to be personal as the church works to find ways to serve the community. With the possibility of an upcoming Presbyterian partnership Habitat for Humanity renovation, while the some financial support will be given to the project, it will be the connecting of people with the project that will be given the greater emphasis.

The congregation also currently serves the community through participation in delivering Mobile Meals.

The growing edge of Outreach is keeping it personal, not only finding ways to serve people rather than organizations, but also in constantly discerning the changing gifts the Spirit is providing within the congregation. New skillsets and interests/passions of congregational members can often reveal new opportunities for local missions. Coupled with this change, Outreach may have to let older, long-term projects end to allow for new projects and renewed energy. Outreach is an area where Community in Christ, Presbyterian may find its next signature ministry that distinguishes itself from its neighbor churches.

The Future

At this point in its collective life, the congregation knows it cannot simply assume an automatic future for Community Christ, Presbyterian. The church cannot maintain itself into a vibrant tomorrow. The state of the church in the United States today does not allow smaller congregations especially to operate on a laissez-faire attitude when it comes to growth in membership. As an institution, Community in Christ, Presbyterian could be a solid and stable church with about one hundred seventy-five members, assuming moderate giving habits. Currently, membership is one hundred thirty-two members. In a four mile radius, there is a population of about 23,000 people. Based on a 2010 U.S. Religion Census, an estimated 11,500 of those may not have a church association. In terms of the raw number of people surrounding the church, a goal of one hundred seventy five members is not unrealistic. However, no church goal is ever achieved without effort and prayer.

A spiritual seed that has already been planted in the congregation is authenticity. Beginning as an alternative church, Community in Christ, Presbyterian is not tied to popular church trends nor has it jumped onto any current theological/church organizational bandwagons in an effort to endear itself to possible future members. Its current identity is not bound to recent theological and cultural controversies, which enables the congregation to define itself by who or what it stands against. The congregation has not overtly politicized its theological message one way or another. While there are large programmatic churches in the area, Community in Christ, Presbyterian is not trying to emulate them as the only model for success. In so many ways, the larger church has now caught up to what Community in Christ, Presbyterian set out to do in 1969: “Believing that God is bigger than any one form of His church, and being continually called to all for new forms of the church... to allow for the Spirit to possibly develop a style of church which would offer a complement and alternative to traditional congregations, hopefully involving the large number of unchurched persons in the community.” The Spirit has been at work in this congregation, planting the necessary seeds for the future in the last forty plus years. The hope for its future is illustrated in the lack of institutional conflict and competing personal agendas. The congregation is not being “held hostage” by any person, group, or agenda. Like many congregations today, Community in Christ, Presbyterian is facing changing times. Members are growing older. Finances are not as secure as they once were. Questions about future institutional and property maintenance create anxiety as future generations may be church differently. However, as Community in Christ, Presbyterian steps into that uncertain future, it has not hamstrung itself as so many other congregations have.

As the church comes to understand itself and its call to ministry today, another key word to that future is found in its name... “community.” The congregation welcomes people with an

ease. Visitors on a Sunday morning cannot leave without having been engaged in conversation and invited to join the Fellowship Time following worship. There is no undercurrent of cultural conformity. New members are welcomed in and soon find their spiritual gifts and their interests becoming a part of the life of the church. Children quickly come to know the congregation as extended family. Currently, there is a freedom for different ideas to see the light and to be implemented, giving members a real sense of ownership of the church rather than just a sense of belonging to someone else's church. Just as the Youth ministry is relational, so is the church as a whole.

The main ministry goal of the congregation, though unstated, is still the creation of community centered around a common call by Jesus Christ. Looking to its future, in constantly reconnecting with Forest Oaks and now the other surrounding neighborhoods, especially as the area changes and becomes less homogenous in character and culture, Community in Christ, Presbyterian is well poised to be a church that is capable of reflecting the growing diversity of its surrounding community. If the congregation were to focus a part of its ministry toward community building ministries (a community garden, a contact point of helping neighbors in the community connect with older neighbors who may need help, a site for community/neighborhood social gatherings through music or food, etc.), the church's natural authenticity would quickly come to light. Visitors to Community in Christ, Presbyterian experience a relaxed joy rather than the tension that can be found in many worshipping communities as people battle over power within the church and/or the polarization of political message, theological message, or worship style.

Community in Christ, Presbyterian has a future, but it must intentionally claim that future. As part of the interim process, the congregation participated in a quick congregational

survey and a series of discernment meetings where each member of the congregation had an opportunity to voice their concerns and hopes for the future.

From those meetings, it became clear that certain changes needed to be made in moving forward.

- We need to be more intentional about rotating committee membership, perhaps having term limits just as there are term limits placed on Ruling Elders.
- We need to move from committee leadership to Session leadership.
- Financial reports should be posted in the bulletin.
- We should have a periodic ministry evaluation and share the results.
- We need improved communication of committee work and our areas of focus/need.
- We need a Men's group.
- We need to place more emphasis on personal spiritual development through study and prayer.

Even as there is needed change, there are also traditions that the congregation does not want to lose.

- The music program and the rich variety of music at the church. We want to keep including as many different people as we can.
- The spirit of friendliness, the personal touch, and the personal connectedness of the congregation. We don't want to be a type of church; we want the church to grow out of the people called to the church.
- Celebrating Communion by gathering around the table.
- 9:30 a.m. Sunday worship time.

- Christmas caroling in the neighborhood.

Evangelism and welcoming new members into the church were clearly set as priorities for this church in the coming years. Much of the time from the discernment group was spent in this discussion.

- We need clear goals for increasing membership.
- Evangelism is the work of the whole church and not just some members. We each have responsibility for inviting, helping potential new members feel at home and allowing new members to be vital to the life of the church.
- Committee goals need to be tied to evangelism.
- We need to work on raising awareness about the church through social media, communication within the surrounding community, and the welcoming of different groups to use the church facilities.
- The church should reflect the increasing diversity in the community.
- How can we move from welcoming new people to helping new people belong?

Outside of evangelism, the discernment groups also revealed where we should put the emphasis with our programs.

- Increase youth and children's programs. Include a parallel program for parents.
- Be multigenerational.
- Missions should be relevant to the needs of the community, e.g. joblessness; senior services. How can we increase our involvement with the local schools in helping to serve the needs of children?
- Men's group.

- Being open to the guidance from the Holy Spirit as an agent for change.
Embracing the value of all people. Growing from hearing others.
- We need a signature ministry that distinguishes Community in Christ, Presbyterian and becomes a well-known piece of our reputation in the community.

Finally, from the discernment meetings and the surveys, the congregation imagined some of the characteristics of the next called pastor at Community in Christ, Presbyterian. Some characteristics are understood because they are the basic requirements of a solo pastorate; these include a person with knowledge of Reformed Theology and Presbyterian polity, a good preacher, a good teacher, and a good administrator.

- This person would need to bring a high energy. The congregation is looking for someone who will be a part of their community. They want to know the excitement and enthusiasm that their minister has not only for ministry in general, but for ministry with them. They are looking for someone whose energy is contagious and inclusive and exudes a spiritual joy that comes with being with people.
- The next pastor needs to be a leader, but a leader without a preset agenda. Community in Christ, Presbyterian does not want to be just like the last church that the newly called pastor served before. They want to grow into the next chapter of the story that is being told here. This congregation is looking for a leader who will find the path forward by understanding the unique context of the congregation and helping the congregation to discern its spiritual gifts given for the up-building of the body of Christ and the common good. Community in

Christ, Presbyterian is looking for a leader who will help grow leaders in the congregation and give everyone, young to old, a sense of ownership in the ministry of this congregation.

- The next minister needs to have social media abilities. How we communicate is changing and we must learn new ways to proclaim the gospel in what may seem like a strange new world to some of us.
- Our next minister will be willing to visit in homes. We expect our pastor to get out of the office and be a part of the community. We want a visible pastor.
- We will call someone who is comfortable and capable of ministering to children and youth as well as serving the needs of our ageing members. We expect our pastor to be a pastor to all.