

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FOND DU LAC

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION STUDY REPORT

November 2022

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INTRODUCTION

OUR TEAM

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Special thanks to: Kris Bartelt Kim Braatz Deb Cooley
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OUR PURPOSE

We gathered data from the past 20 years and looked at who we were/are as a church. We used this information to help us consider our future as First Presbyterian Church of Fond du Lac.

OUR PROCESS

After being approved by Session, the Congregational Mission Study Team (CMST) met for the first time on June 8, 2022. We decided Tuesday mornings were the best time for all, so we scheduled future meetings. We identified four areas to focus on for our data-gathering: our church's past (roughly 2000-present), our Fond du Lac community, where do we think God wants us to go, and what attributes are we looking for in our next pastor. On July 17 we introduced team members to the congregation, informed the congregation about the four areas we were researching, and listed the time frame for sharing this information.

The first information session was presented during worship on July 31. Church statistics included membership, attendance, staffing, services and educational opportunities, ministry activities, and budgeting. Community formation covered a wide range of information on Fond du Lac, including educational, employment,

religious, and recreational offerings, as well as an overview of the population. At the end of this presentation a survey was handed out, to be completed and returned by August 14. There was also an option to complete the survey on-line. After this date the team tallied the results and presented the results to the congregation on August 28.

During worship on September 25, the congregation held an exercise in discerning the direction in which we felt God wanted us to go.

During worship on October 9, the congregation held another discerning exercise. This time, we considered what attributes we want our next pastor to have.

Finally, a wrap-up presentation was held after worship on November 6. On November 21, the finished Congregational Mission Study was presented to the Session for their review and approval.



Exercise in discerning the direction of our church.



Desired attributes of our next pastor.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FOND DU LAC
Sheboygan and Marr Streets (1865 – 1998)

OUR HISTORY

The First Presbyterian Church of Fond du Lac was organized on February 26, 1855 and was incorporated on December 31, 1901. The initial 12 members of the congregation undertook the major task of organizing and sustaining a church with a small membership, no physical building, no funds and no installed pastor.

The first church was built on the corner of Main and Rees Streets. As Fond du Lac grew, the congregation decided to move the church to better attract new members. In 1865 the church was moved to the corner of Sheboygan and Marr Streets. A major fire destroyed two churches and numerous other structures on Marr Street in 1909 but through the efforts of young members, the Presbyterian Church sustained only minor damage to the church tower. Because church membership was

steadily increasing, it was decided to build a new church. The initial building was razed and ground was broken for the new church, at the old site, on September 13, 1915. The church remained at the Sheboygan and Marr Streets location from 1865-1998.

During this time there were several remodeling and renovation projects as well as construction of the education building. Much of the church was destroyed by a devastating fire in March 1996. Even as clean-up and salvaging were in process, dedicated members began planning for the future. It was decided the best course of action would be to build at a different site due to very limited parking at the current site and the desire to make the church more accessible. The site of our current building was chosen, and construction was completed in 1998.

Several important parts from the old church were incorporated into our current building. These items include:

- Two of the original stained-glass windows - they needed to be reconstructed due to damage from firefighting efforts; the third original window was quite damaged and pieces were salvaged to make small crosses and angels for members to purchase as mementos.
- The cornerstone of the Good Samaritan is above the main church entrance.
- The marble arch that was at the front of the sanctuary now graces the entrance to the sanctuary.
- The organ and piano were refurbished and have continued to provide beautiful music.
- The large wooden cross in the front of the sanctuary.
- The baptismal font.
- The “Deborah chairs” (used by the elders around the communion table in the past; now located in the parlor).
- Pieces of History: beautiful clocks were made from burned and salvaged wood; crosses and angels were made from broken stained-glass windows. All these items were sold as a fundraiser to help build our new church.



1998 - Construction of our current church building at 1225 Fourth Street, Fond du Lac

First Presbyterian ventured into the technology age several years ago by developing a church webpage and Facebook account to help members stay connected and to encourage community interest. With the start of the Covid-19 pandemic many things changed quickly. Pastor Harrison and the AV team set up online and ZOOM services. Church groups, including the Session and the Deacons, met by ZOOM. We returned to worship in our sanctuary in July 2021; masking was mandatory and social distancing was encouraged. There was no choir or singing. As the pandemic slowed, we

gradually eased restrictions. In March 2022 masking became a personal choice and social distancing was relaxed. The choir has not returned yet but we do have cantors to lead the congregation in singing. Christian education for adults and children has resumed after worship on Sundays. Most church meetings are now held in-person at church, some with a ZOOM option. Some of our community ministries, such as Loaves and Fishes and Feed My Starving Children, had to be organized differently but were accomplished successfully.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FOND DU LAC

1225 Fourth Street (1998 - Present)



OUR SETTING

HISTORY OF FOND DU LAC

The city of Fond du Lac is located at the bottom of Lake Winnebago. French traders and explorers who passed through in the 1600's gave the name to Fond du Lac, which means "the base or foot of the lake." Lake Winnebago itself is a shallow lake with a maximum depth of 21 feet. Boating, fishing, and water skiing are enjoyed by many. Fond du Lac is the largest city and the county seat in Fond du Lac County.



15,000 years ago the first tribes of Indians who lived in Wisconsin were known as the Mound Builders because they used mounds to bury their dead. Taylor Park, in Fond du Lac, has two mounds, which may be associated with these Native People. It is believed that the Mound Builders vanished from the area due to diseases or became part of other Native groups in the area.

The Winnebago, or Ho-Chunk was the largest tribe to inhabit the Fond du Lac area. The Potawatomi and Menominee also lived in this area. The Indians call Lake Winnebago "okawaniu", which translates to "end of lake." It was the Ho-Chunk people who welcomed Colwert and Fanna Pier to the Fond du Lac area, who were among the first white settlers here. They were actually the only white settlers in the area from June 6, 1836 to March 11, 1837. They

moved into what was called the Fond du Lac House. On February 18, 1838, mail was brought to this house for the first time.

In the 1800's, the territorial governors, James Duane Doty and Nathaniel Tallmadge helped to develop Fond du Lac. Tallmadge organized railroads, founded schools, and helped to establish agriculture. In 1832, Doty began to build a road between Fort

Howard and Prairie du Chien via Fort Winnebago. In 1837-8, a plank road was built between Fond du Lac and Sheboygan, and by 1839, a road linked Waupun and Fond du Lac to Madison.

The first federal population census of Fond du Lac was taken by John Bannister on July 1, 1840. There were 139 white settlers spread out among the county. On January 22, 1844, Fond du Lac became a city of the Wisconsin Territory. By March 19, 1852, 2,000 white settlers lived in the area.

Between 1850 and 1880, German, Dutch, Irish, Welsh, and Scottish immigrants began settling in the Fond du Lac area. By 1870, Fond du Lac was the state's largest city, a major center of railroading and second only to Dane County in wheat production.

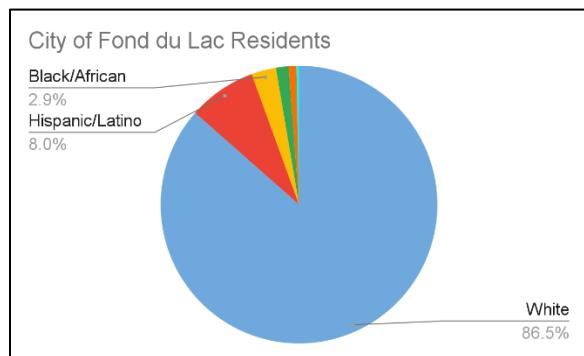
FOND DU LAC TODAY

Fond du Lac is a small city with a population of 44,283. We are located one hour south of Green Bay, home of the Green Bay Packers and

one hour north of Milwaukee, home of the Brewers Major League Baseball team. Madison, the capital and home to the Wisconsin Badgers, is one hour to the southwest.

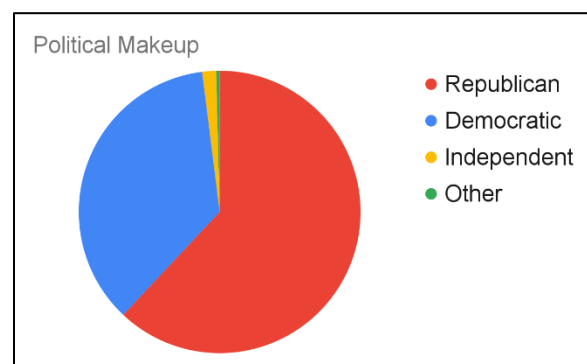
The average winter temperature is 14° to 39°F. The average temperature in summer is 69°F to 75°F. The average annual rainfall is 28.80 inches and average annual snowfall is 39.1 inches.

The median age of our residents is 38.9 years. The graph below shows that the majority of residents are white, followed by people of Hispanic descent.



Seventy-nine percent of the residents were born in Fond du Lac. Ninety-five percent of Fond du Lac's residents were born in the United States. Seventy-one percent were born in Wisconsin. 3.96% are not United States citizens.

The political makeup of Fond du Lac leans conservative, with 62% Republican, 36% Democrat, and 1.6% listed as Independent.



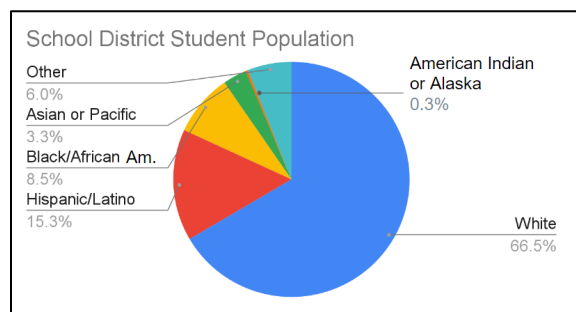
According to the Fond du Lac School District, the city of Fond du Lac enrolls about 7,000 students. There are 10 public elementary schools, 4 public middle schools and 2 public high schools: Fond du Lac High School and Stem Institute. There is a Catholic school with grades

K-12, several Lutheran elementary schools, and a Lutheran High School.



Fond du Lac High School

As indicated on the following graph, the majority of students are white, followed by Hispanic or Latino.



Thirty-five percent of the student body is economically disadvantaged and qualifies for free or reduced lunch. Fond du Lac High School is ranked #227 out of 831 schools in Wisconsin. This ranking reflects the graduation rate of 93% and college readiness level of 19.3%. Fond du Lac is also home to Marian University (a private, Roman Catholic, liberal arts university), the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh - Fond du Lac Campus, and Moraine Park Technical College.



Moraine Park Technical College

According to the 2020 census, Fond du Lac has a high school graduation rate of 89%. 12.41% of the population have an Associate Degree, 15.88% have a Bachelor's Degree, and 7.25% have a Graduate Degree. In comparison, 89% of Wisconsin residents have completed high school, 22.2% have an Associate Degree, and 30.8% have a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

The average income of people in Fond du Lac is \$38,320. Labor force participation is 65.1%. The employment rate is 62%. The unemployment rate is 4.7%. According to the 2020 census, the median household income of Fond du Lac residents is \$54,587.

According to city-data.com, in 2019, violent crime in Fond du Lac was lower than the national violent crime rate average by 17.78%. Property crime rate in Fond du Lac was lower than the national property crime rate average by 12.06%.

There are several major employers in Fond du Lac and the surrounding area. They are Mercury Marine, Michels Corporation, Quad Graphics, Grande Cheese, J.F. Ahern Company, C.D. Smith, Brenner Tank, FIVES Giddings & Lewis, Buechel Stone Company, Alliant Energy, Eden Stone Company, Wells Manufacturing Company, and Mid-States Aluminum.

SSM Health and Aurora are the two major medical employers in Fond du Lac. During the Fall of 2022, Aurora began building a hospital addition to their clinic. Ripon Medical Center is located 30 minutes from Fond du Lac.

There are fifty-seven churches in the Fond du Lac area. There are several Catholic churches, eleven Lutheran, eleven nondenominational churches, and four Baptist churches. A Spirituality Center offers Tai Chi, Yoga, Reiki, Qi Gong, and many opportunities for meditation.

POVERTY / MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

The poverty rate in Fond du Lac is 11.6%. According to the 2020 census, Wisconsin's poverty rate is 10%. There are many resources available for people in Fond du Lac to access. They are:

- St. Katherine Drexel Center - a homeless shelter
- Salvation Army
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Broken Bread - provides a meal and some groceries
- Fondy Food Pantry - provides groceries once a week
- Loaves and Fishes - provides a meal twice a week
- Advocap – provides resources to reduce poverty
- Senior Center - offers various free activities for seniors, plus a meal five days a week
- Solutions Center - a domestic violence shelter
- Family Resource Center - supports children and families in need
- Aging and Disability Resource

- The ARC - a resource for adults and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Fond du Lac Health Care Center - provides mental health care
- Gratitude Club - supports people in recovery
- ASTOP - a sexual assault service provider
- Hospice Home of Hope
- SHP (Sleep in Heavenly Peace) - builds and provides beds to children

Many of the above resources have opportunities for service. Broken Bread, Loaves and Fishes, and Fondy Food Pantry ask for volunteers to package food, make meals, and distribute meals. Financial donations are always accepted. Hospice seeks volunteers to help take meal orders, clean up after a meal, or offer companionship to those in the end stage of life. SHP seeks volunteers to help make and/or distribute beds. They also accept bedding donations.



Fond du Lac Senior Center



St. Katharine Drexel Homeless Shelter, est. 2022

RECREATIONAL/CULTURAL

Fond du Lac and the surrounding area offers many opportunities for recreation and cultural activities. The Greenway Arboretum, Gottfried Prairie and Arboretum, Lakeside Park, Kiekhaefer Park, Oakfield Railroad Prairie State Natural Area, and Audubon Walk at Camelot are just a few of the hiking and biking trails. Hobbs Woods, Horicon Marsh, and the Eldorado Marsh are also great hiking/biking trails within 45 minutes of Fond du Lac.

The Milwaukee Zoo is an hour away and is the largest zoo in Wisconsin. Green Bay, Madison, Racine, and West Bend also have zoos, but are on a much smaller scale.

There are three public swimming pools in Fond du Lac: Taylor Park, which meets the requirements for swim competitions; the Fairgrounds Aquatic Pool, which has slides and

an area for small children; and the Aquatic Center, which has a large indoor pool and a smaller heated pool and offers yoga and therapy classes.



Taylor Park Pool

Fond du Lac has a baseball team called the Dock Spiders. They play in the Northwoods League,

which is a summer collegiate baseball league. Their home games are played at Herr-Baker Field on the campus of Marian University. The Dock Spiders won the 2018 Northwoods Championship and the 2019 Northwoods League Wisconsin-Illinois Pod Championship. Appleton, just 40 minutes north of Fond du Lac, is home to the Timber Rattlers, a minor league baseball team and an affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers, a major league baseball team. Green Bay, an hour away, is home to the Green Bay Packers.

The largest park in Fond du Lac is Lakeside Park, located on Lake Winnebago. The park covers about 145 acres. There is a boating harbor, lighthouse, petting zoo, picnic shelters, large pavilion, volleyball and softball courts, concession rides, canoe rentals, a large playground area, which has a splash pad and accessible play area, and fishing piers. The park also has a hiking/biking trail.



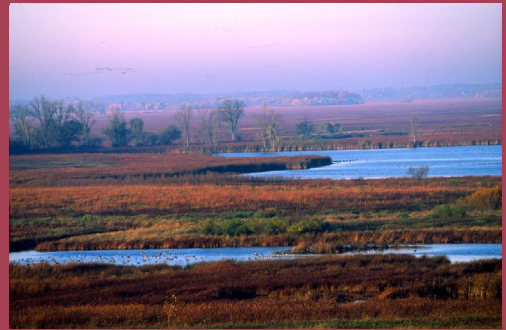
Lake Winnebago



Lakeside Park Lighthouse

Fond du Lac Facts

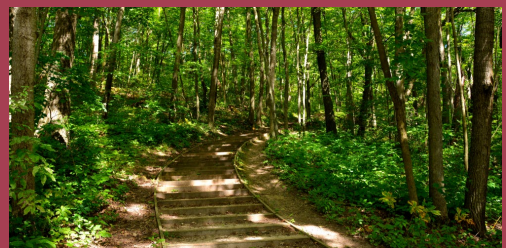
Fond du Lac is only 30 minutes from the beautiful Horicon Marsh, a national and state wildlife refuge and the largest freshwater cattail marsh in the US.



Mercury Marine, one of the world's largest producers of outboard motors and MerCruiser inboard engines, was established in Fond du Lac in 1946. Mercury employees over 3,200 employees at its Fond du Lac locations.



The Northern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest is located in Fond du Lac County and offers year-round recreation among world-famous glacial landforms.



Buttermilk Creek Park is smaller. Twice a week in the summer, concerts are offered in the bandstand. In winter, there are two hills for sledding; one is smaller and more suited to smaller children. Roosevelt Park has a picnic shelter and area for games. In the winter they have an outdoor ice rink.

The Blue Line Family Ice Center is an indoor ice rink that is home to the many figure skating and hockey teams in Fond du Lac. They also offer public skating occasionally.

Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts provides free outdoor concerts in the summer and indoor concerts throughout the rest of the year. They also have a book club which is open to the public.



Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts

Fond du Lac's Public Library offers many activities for various age groups. They also have a book club which is open to the public. The library is used as an informal warming shelter for the homeless in the winter and a place to cool off in the summer.

In summary, Fond du Lac has many wonderful things to offer, such as concerts and outdoor activities. We have a rich and diverse history. It is also a city with a high poverty rate and therefore, offers many opportunities for ministry.

Fond du Lac Facts

Fond du Lac is home to the historic Galloway House and Village, a 15 acre showpiece with thirty buildings that serve as mini museums, celebrating Wisconsin commerce and lifestyle of the 1800s.



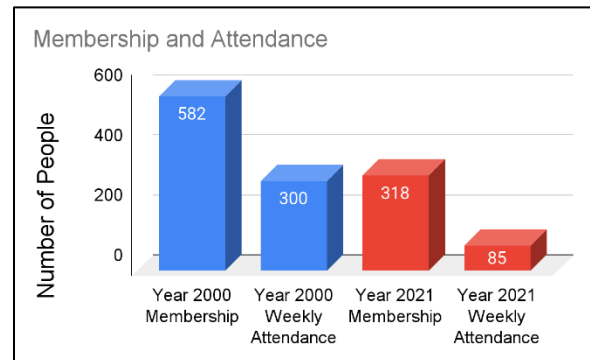
Fond du Lac County boasts approximately 1,400 farms, with nearly 190,360 cropped acres. The average farm size is about 226 acres. Among Wisconsin counties, Fond du Lac ranks first for total milk production and third for the number of dairy cows.



OUR RECENT HISTORY

In looking back over the past 20 years numerous areas of interest were scrutinized. What was the church like in 2000:

- What was our membership and attendance?
- What were worship opportunities?
- What educational offerings were there?
- What was our staffing pattern?
- What was the financial picture?



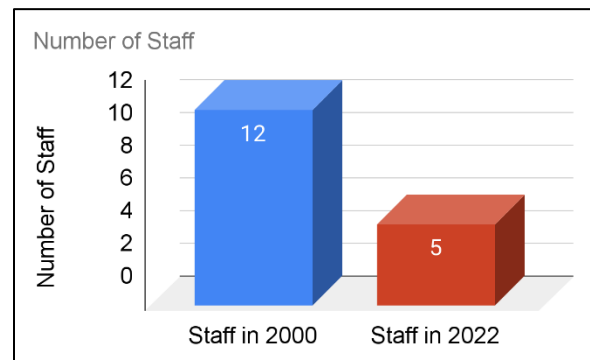
This information was compared to what we see in our church today. The results were then presented to the congregation.

Membership in 2000 was 582 and average weekly attendance was 300. In 2022 membership is 318 and average weekly attendance is 85. Because of the Covid pandemic we also wanted to compare numbers from 2019 to better understand what effect the pandemic might have had. In 2019, membership was 338 and average weekly attendance was 121. From the numbers, we find that the major decrease in membership and attendance actually occurred prior to the pandemic. With the pandemic finally becoming less of an issue, we are hopeful that attendance may increase in the coming months.

In the past 20 years our membership has decreased by 45% and attendance has decreased by 73% and yet we are involved in almost as many ministries now as we were back then.

More adults are involved in Faith Formation activities now than in 2000. We are interested in growing our faith.

In 2000 there were 12 paid staff which included pastor, associate pastor, pastor of visitation, director of children's ministries/children's choir/bell choir, contemporary worship coordinator, contemporary worship sound technician, music director, office manager, financial secretary, financial assistant, custodian, and parish nurse. We now have 5 paid staff which includes pastor, director of Christian education, worship coordinator, financial assistant, communications coordinator, and a contracted custodial crew.



Spring Yard Cleanup

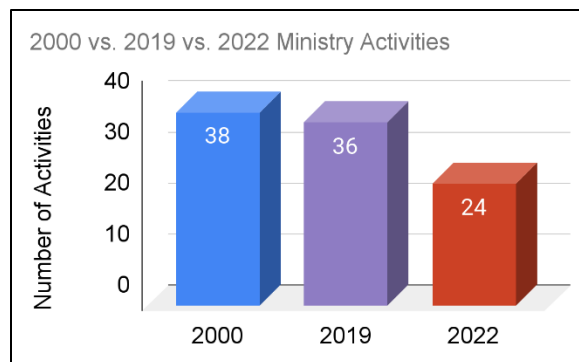
Weekly services in 2000 consisted of a Saturday evening service and 2 Sunday morning services. The Radio Ministry was on KFIZ on Sunday morning. Currently there is one Sunday morning service, which is live-streamed and posted to YouTube, and the Radio Ministry on KFIZ.

In 2000 there were 179 children, birth to 18 years, on the church roll. Sunday school classes were held on Sunday morning between the 2 services. We could not find a record of actual attendance but certainly all of them did not attend on a weekly basis. Presbyterian Youth Association (PYA) was offered for junior and senior high kids and there was a children's choir.

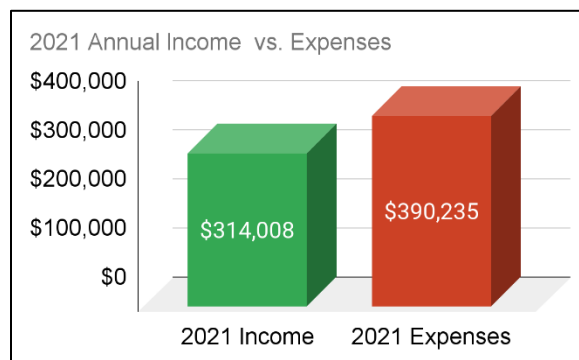
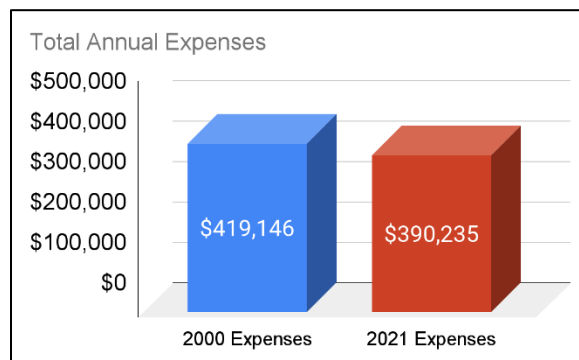
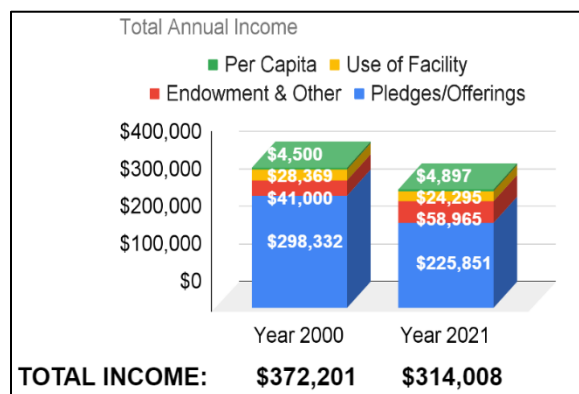
Current church roll lists 24 children, birth to 18 years. Sunday School is held after the Sunday service at the same time adult classes are offered. PYA is still offered. The fact that we dropped from 179 children on the Sunday school roll down to 24 indicates that we are an aging congregation.

Adult education classes (now called Adult Faith Formation) were offered on some Sundays in 2000 and there were discipleship classes available intermittently during the week. In 2000 there were 31 adult attendees throughout the year. Within the first half of this year we have already had 42 attendees at Sunday morning classes, our Lenten Bible Study, and special book studies. It is encouraging to see that even with decreased membership there is more participation in Adult Faith Formation.

First Presbyterian has always been involved in many ministry activities, locally, nationally, and internationally. In 2000 there were 38 different activities. In 2019 (again looking at any effect from the pandemic) there were 36. As of August 2022, there have been 24 activities thus far.



The final area looked at was the church's budget. In 2000, the income was \$372,201 and expenses were \$419,146. In 2021, (the last complete year we have data for) income was \$314,008 and expenses were \$390,235.



In summary, since 2000, First Presbyterian's membership has dropped by 45%. Attendance has decreased by 73%. Staffing has decreased by 60%. Income has dropped by 15% but expenses have dropped by only 7%. This last fact means that even though expenses have decreased, income has dropped by a larger percentage.

There are several implications for the future of First Presbyterian Church, Fond du Lac:

- At our current rate of spending, within 2-3 years our checking/savings/stock asset accounts will be depleted. This is the money that is used to cover budget deficits and building maintenance projects. Some of the more expensive future projects include replacing carpeting in the entire church (\$23,000), blacktop resurfacing (\$130,000), furnace replacement (\$128,000 if all 8 furnaces go at one time), and flat roof replacement in 3-5 years (\$50,000). This means we cannot continue our current financial trajectory without a significant increase in giving.
- As we rebuild our ministries post-pandemic, we need to keep in mind that we only have 27% of the attendance we did in 2000 and only 35% of the paid staff we formerly had. Quite simply, we have less staff and fewer members available to accomplish our work and ministry goals.



Labyrinth at the back of our property



Building beds for Sleep in Heavenly Peace



Food Drive



Sorting School Supplies for Back to School Fond du Lac



Intergenerational Vacation Bible School



Alternative Gift Fair



Easter Breakfast hosted by our youth



Christmas Cantata



Confirmation Class with Faith Partners



Christmas Pageant Puppets

WHO WE ARE NOW

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION STUDY SURVEY

FACT: The top 3 aspects of our church that were cited by survey respondents as most meaningful: worship (48 people), fellowship (35 people), and mission (15 people).

FACT: The most popular word people used to describe our church: welcoming (51 people).

FACT: 94% of respondents felt the church met their spiritual needs.

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CREATED AND CONDUCTED

There were 47 questions on the survey. We received 87 responses. We feel this number of responses gives us a good representation of our church. The number of responses is very close to our average Sunday morning attendance which is 85 people.

To create a list of survey questions:

- We examined the questions another church had asked in their congregational mission study survey.
- We discussed topics that we felt were relevant to our church
- We looked for gaps in current information available on our church
- We took Pastor Ken's recommendations into consideration
- We polled current staff for suggestions

The surveys were distributed via paper copies and a link to online survey access. Paper copies could be picked up at church or were mailed to individuals. The online survey link was sent out in the Wednesday updates. The surveys were available on July 31st and were due back August 14th. Anyone attending the church was welcome to participate. There was no age restriction except youth needed to be old enough to read and understand the survey.

SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

We are an older congregation with two-thirds of respondents aged 55 or older. Two-thirds of respondents are married, and few have minor children at home. We are well-educated with levels well above national averages: 48% of us have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. In comparison:

- Only 23% of adults in Fond du Lac have this level of education
- Only 31% state-wide
- Only 33% nationwide

We are also a mixed-income congregation with members from all economic levels. 20% make below the Fond du Lac average income, and 40% make above the Fond du Lac average income. We generally view ourselves as a slightly conservative church, but we are more liberal than the city of Fond du Lac as a whole.

While most members feel the church is an important part of their life and meets their spiritual needs, we are concerned that the survey indicated low interest in adult faith

formation. We are actively looking for creative ways to increase participation and desire to grow in faith. 68% indicated they were satisfied with their knowledge about Presbyterian beliefs. 60% of respondents were committed to remaining Presbyterian (USA).

When forced to choose between a thoughtful sermon or moving/inspirational music, 75% of us placed higher importance on a good sermon. Responses showed strong interest in both traditional organ music and contemporary praise band style music. We clearly need to incorporate both styles into our services.

It is important to note that a 2017 Gallup Poll placed a good music program as low on the list of priorities for most potential new members. The 2017 study found that churchgoers cite sermons as the primary reason they attended church. Other major drawing-points were spiritual programs geared toward children and teenagers, community outreach with volunteer opportunities, and dynamic leaders.

While church attendance pre-Covid matched national averages, our post-Covid attendance has dropped indicating that some members have not returned. Unfortunately, only 19% of us are actively inviting people to attend church. This concerns us because our membership is declining.

In our research regarding potential pastoral candidates, the majority of people were fine with hiring a female pastor (93%) or someone from an ethnic minority group (89%). The number of people comfortable with hiring a LGBTQIA+ pastor was a bit lower (64%). However, more people were comfortable with hiring a LGBTQIA+ staff (i.e. not pastor) (76%).

We think of ourselves as a very active church that volunteers. However, discussion at the annual meeting indicated we often have difficulty recruiting people to serve in both short-term and long-term commitments such as committee roles. In addition, as an older congregation, several people have health conditions that restrict them from volunteering.

Next year 55% hope to maintain their current level of volunteering, 17% plan to increase their level of volunteering, and 6% hope to decrease. 44% of respondents have served on session, and 44% have served as a deacon. The fact that 44% have served on session and 44% have served as deacon is just a coincidence. At least 20 individuals have only served on one or the other, so it's not 44% of people doing all the work.

We don't know what percentage of their income our respondents give, but we appear to be a more generous congregation than the national average. Overall, 95% of our regular attendees give at least some financial donations. 53 of our respondents stated that financially supporting our church is high on their list of priorities. 17% of respondents have remembered our church in their will.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

While researching how our church was doing on staffing, we discovered we are over-staffed in comparison to the national average. Based on current levels of giving and spending, we are unable to financially sustain our current staffing.

According to Vanderbloemen, a Christian Executive Search Firm that helps churches search for and hire staff, the average church spends 52% of their budget on staff compensation, with 60% on the high end. We run slightly over the high end at 69% of our total budget.

The average church has the equivalent of 1 full-time staff per 77 people attending on a Sunday

morning. This includes all pastoral staff, assistant pastors, worship directors, administrative assistants, custodial crew, etc. We have the equivalent of 4.8 full-time staff which equals 1 staff per 18 people attending on a Sunday morning.

According to research by the Unstuck Group overstaffing is often a warning sign that a church is heading into trouble. They gave three warning signs to look for when a church discovers it is overstaffed. We found strong evidence that our church had problems in all three of the warning sign categories which were:

1. Have we become Insider Focused?

Typically, an overstaffed church is paying people to do ministry and run programs to keep long-time members happy.

2. Do we have a Poor Culture of Volunteerism?

There is a direct connection between staffing and volunteerism. Generally, the more a church spends on staffing the less likely attenders are to serve.

3. Have we stopped growing?

There is also a direct connection between staffing and church growth. The more a church spends on staff the more the rate of attendance growth slows.

Church growth does not occur by hiring more staff. Rather, church growth happens when churchgoers get excited about volunteering and take ownership of the various ministries in their church.

How do these 3 warning signs apply to us?

1. Warning Sign #1. Have we become insider focused?

On a positive note, we are a church that clearly cares about their community. We participate in numerous missions in the community. Several organizations use our building to further their mission work. We have a very good relationship with many of our city's non-profit organizations.

On the flip side, we are not very good at inviting people to attend our church, and as a result, our church membership and financial resources are significantly declining. Only 19% of respondents actively invite people to church.

2. Warning Sign #2. Do we have a poor culture of volunteerism?

Based on survey results, we think of ourselves as a very active church, but as mentioned previously, we frequently have difficulty filling volunteer roles.

3. Warning Sign #3. Have we stopped growing?

Clearly our membership and attendance are significantly down.

THREE ADDITIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST EXPRESSED IN OUR SURVEY

The number one reason people began attending our church and continue to attend our church is for the relationships they have made. This trend was documented in numerous written comments throughout our survey and during the three "sticker" visioning exercises conducted during our worship services. We can have the most amazing ministry opportunities and activities, but what it ultimately boils down to is this: the most important thing we can do as a church is help people feel wanted, cared

for, and know they have made friends in our church.

As a church most of us feel we are doing a good job although there were a few comments with suggestions to improve this area. Five people mentioned improvement in this area would help us become more attractive to potential new members. However, overall, we think of ourselves as very strong in the area of friendliness and welcoming.

Both survey results and the visioning exercises show there is a strong interest in reviving ministries for children and youth. However, survey questions regarding volunteerism interests showed there wasn't a strong interest in volunteering for those ministries. Based on survey results, we are concerned about how we will rebuild the children and youth ministries without sufficient volunteers.

Finally, music has been getting a fairly low number of votes in our "sticker" visioning

exercises. However, when our survey asked what would make our church more attractive to potential new members, improving the music program was the number one concern people listed. There is clearly a miss-match between survey results and the visioning exercises. While the visioning exercises appear to place music as a low concern in our congregation, there is a viable portion of our congregation that desires to rebuild and improve our music program.

OUR STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Our Weaknesses as a Church

Attendance and membership have significantly declined since 2000. Before Covid, our numbers matched nationwide membership and attendance statistics: most churches have been in decline over the past few decades. Post-Covid, there is not enough information to determine how we compare to national trends.

Only 19% of us invite people to church. Upon making this discovery, conversations have been ignited regarding how we can change these numbers and reignite interest and courage to breach the topic of church with our friends and neighbors.

We are coming to grips with the fact that we have not been as good at volunteering as we thought we were. Volunteerism interests gathered during the survey will be passed on to the various ministry teams in the church. This information should help the teams discover missed opportunities for recruiting volunteers. For example, there are currently only a few people doing all the groundskeeping, but several people on the survey said they were interested in helping with this activity.

Finally, our expenses versus income are off-balance. This is most strongly seen in our staffing expenses. Unfortunately, our church will need to make some difficult decisions regarding the budget and staffing in order to avoid exhausting our financial reserves over the next few years.

While much of this information sounds bleak, we acknowledge that we are a congregation blessed with many resources and dedicated members that know how to work together to solve our problems.

Our Strengths as a Church

Even if we were not able to maintain current staffing, the remaining staff would still place our ratios of staff to attendees above the national average.

We have a mixed-income church with individuals who make well above the Fond du Lac average, as well as many who make well below the Fond du Lac average. As a result, we have members who know how to minister across all levels of economic barriers.

We are a very generous church. Whenever opportunities arise to support local missions through donations of items or monetary support, members quickly rise to the occasion.

We are a well-educated and skilled church, with education levels well above national averages. We are resourceful. As Pastor Ken says, we are one of the most creative congregations he's ever met.

We have an amazing building and property that we are blessed to be able to share with our community.

We have a strong relationship with many community organizations.

Most importantly, we have a congregation that really cares about its church. We have a strong desire to love and support our members.

Final Recommendations

We recommend that the church create a balanced budget that will support our financial ministries for years to come. We realize that this may mean adjusting our current staffing ratios. While this is a very difficult subject, we are highly concerned that putting off this decision for long will produce dire consequences for our congregation within the next 2 to 3 years.

Gratefully, we are still in a good financial position to have options that will allow us to recover from this set-back and potentially regrow the church ministry. In contrast, if we delay this decision for long, options may be taken from us, and we may be forced to make

decisions out of a crisis-mode of thinking. We recognize that crisis-decision making often produces unwanted or less-desirable results.

Secondly, we recommend holding a pledge drive that focuses both on financial giving and donation of time. If we are able to sufficiently increase financial donations, we may be able to off-set some of the budgeting problems and lessen the impact on our upcoming staffing decisions.

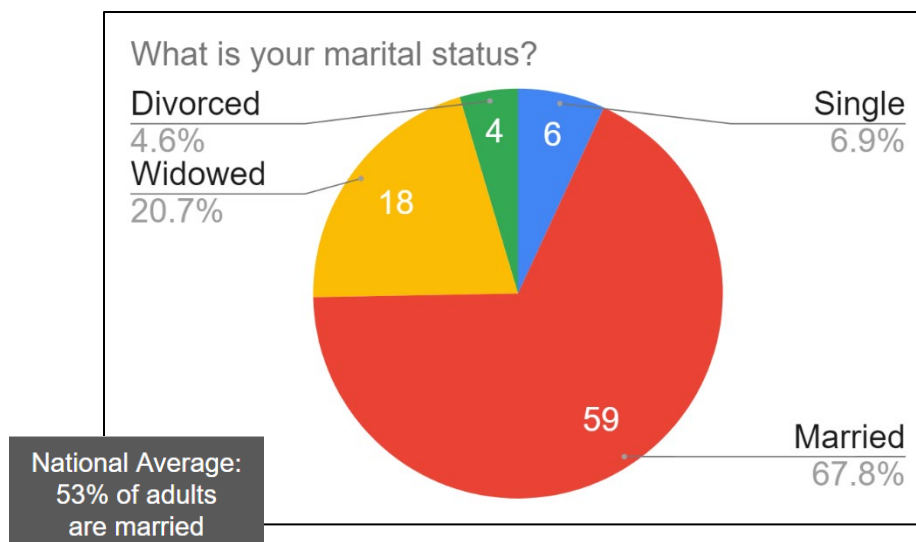
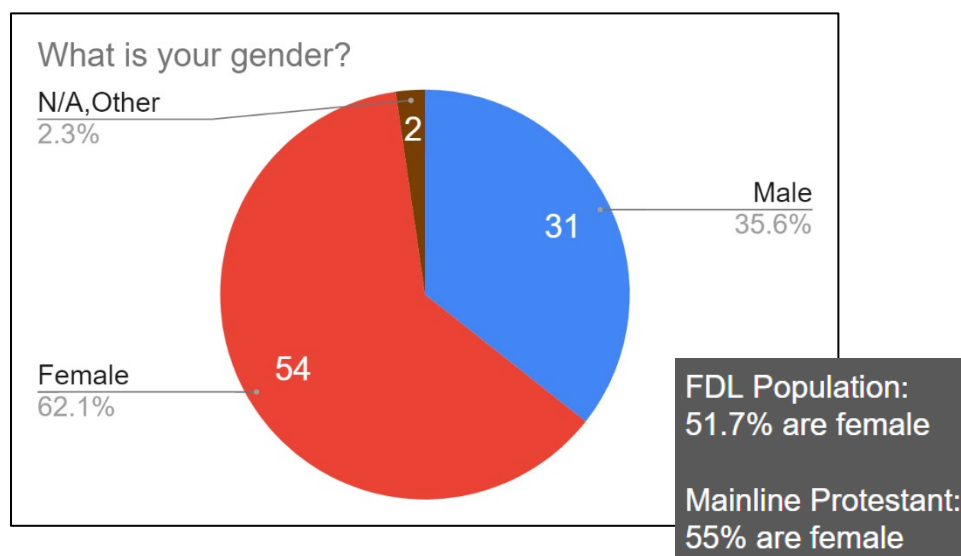
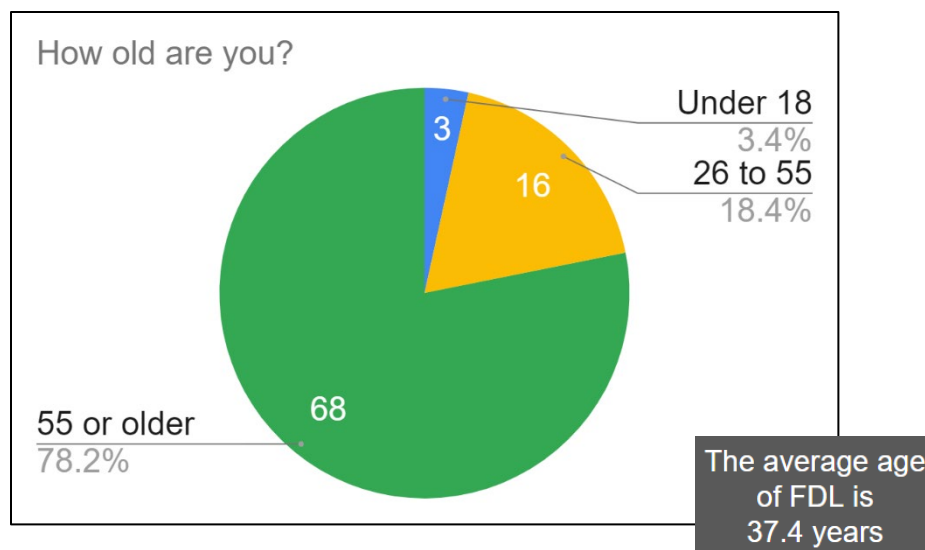
Now that our church is aware of the lack of sufficient volunteerism, holding a time "pledge drive" will help us determine our level of commitment to potential future ministries. This knowledge will help our incoming pastor, staff, and ministry-leaders plan how they can best use their time and talents.

Finally, we recommend that the church facilitate discussion during Adult Faith Formation to examine why we are afraid to invite people to church. Perhaps a portion of the time can be spent in brainstorming ways we can creatively invite our friends, neighbors, and the community.

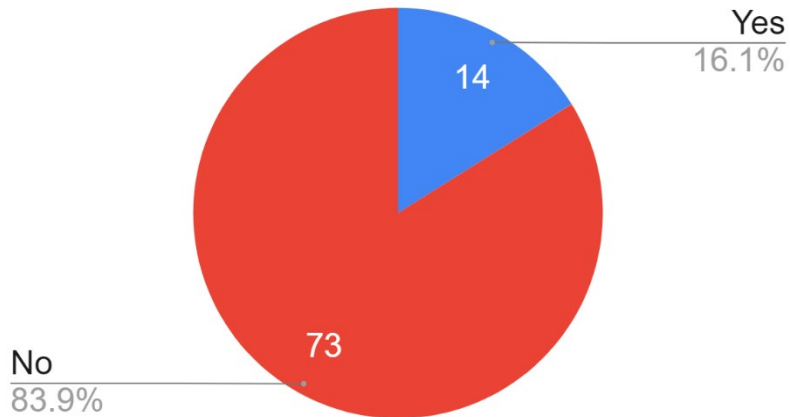
In Conclusion

We are grateful that the church was able to conduct this Congregational Mission Study. While we will need to make some difficult decisions over the next year, we are still early enough in the process that we have options. We can become any church we decide to be.

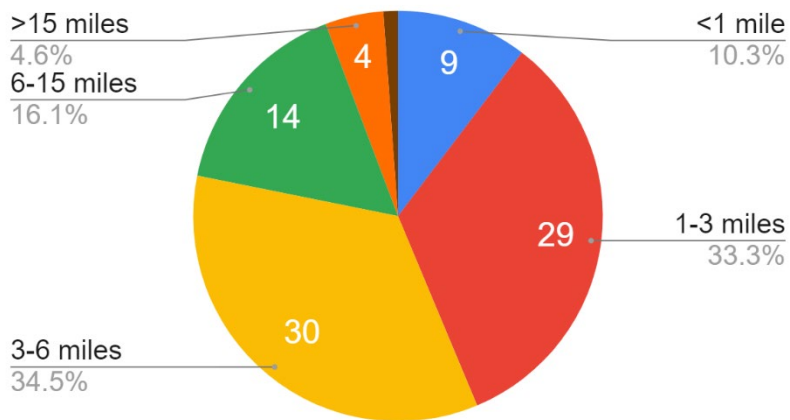
While our past informs our future, it does not decide our future.



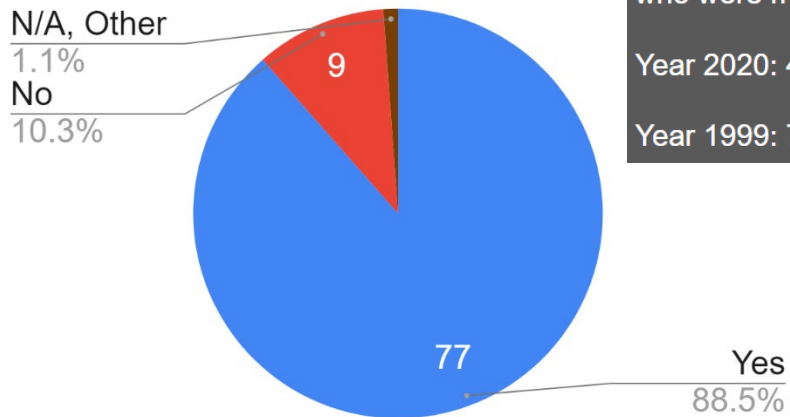
Do you have minor children living with you?



How far from church do you live?



Are you a member?



(Based on Gallup-Poll)
Nationwide: percent of people
who were members of a church:

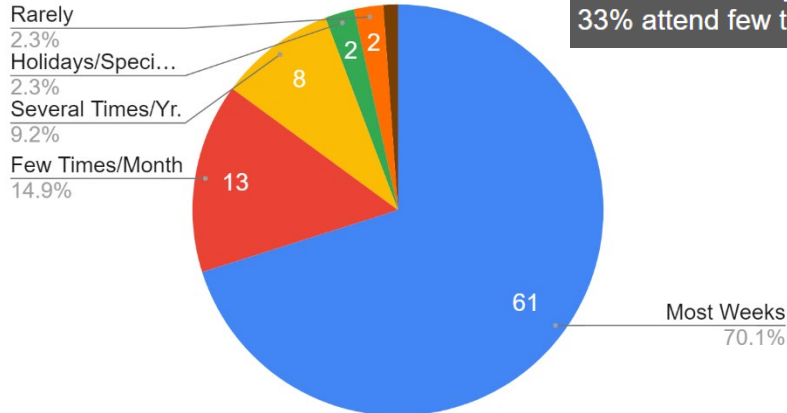
Year 2020: 47%

Year 1999: 70%

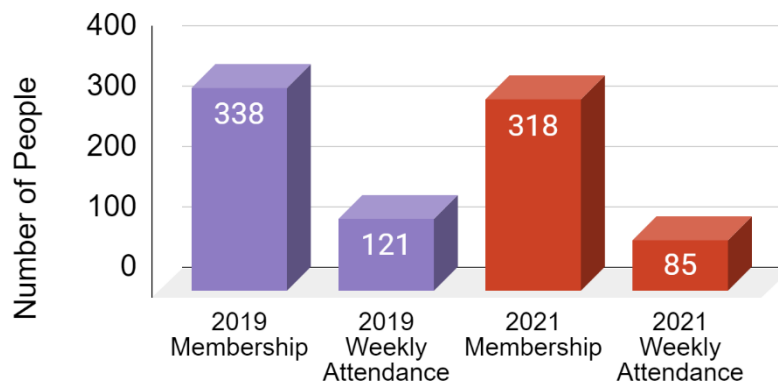
Based on Pew Research:
Nationwide adults with religious affiliation:

36% attend every week
33% attend few times a month or year

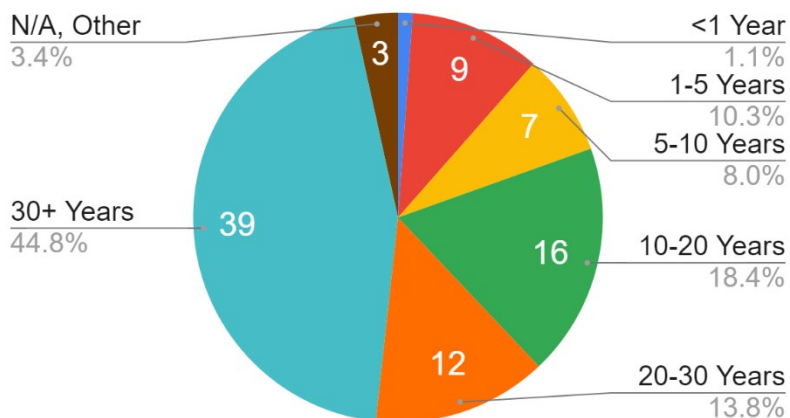
How often do you attend church?

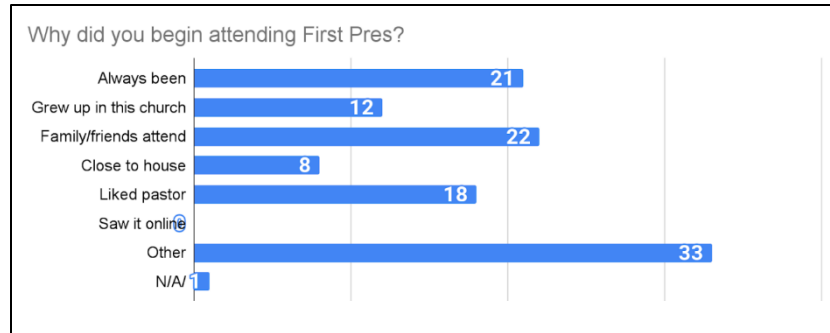


2019 vs. 2022 Membership and Attendance



How long have you been attending First Pres?



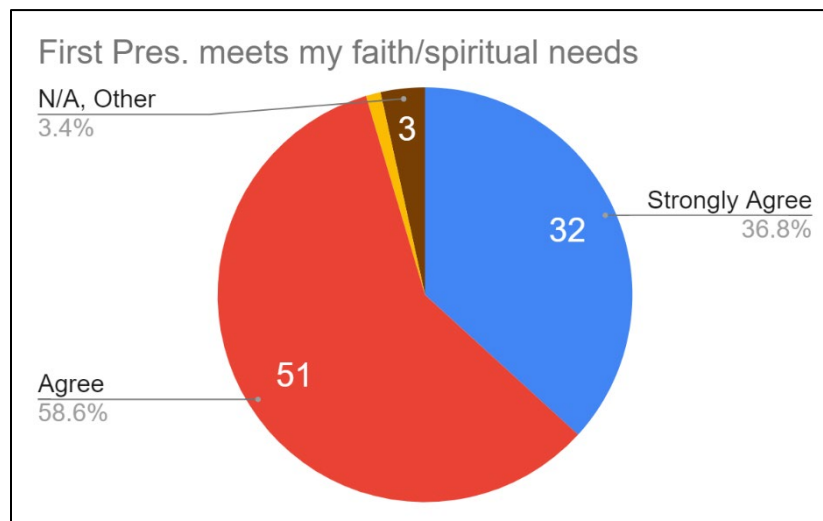


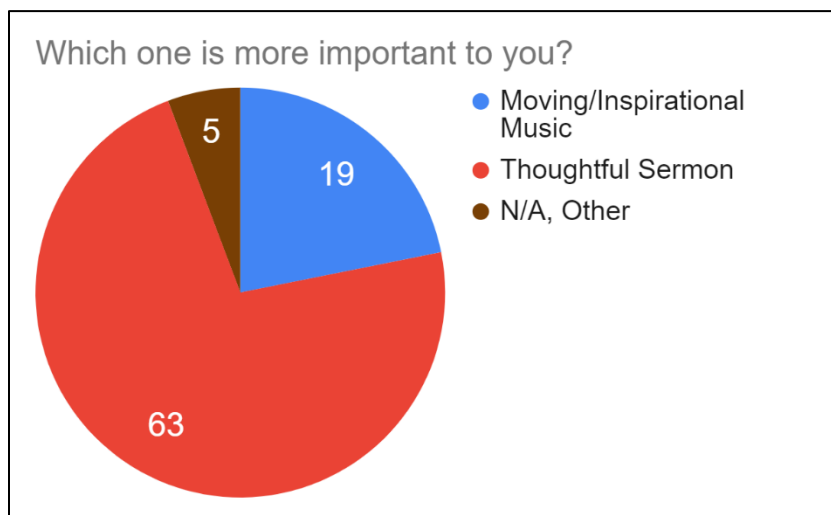
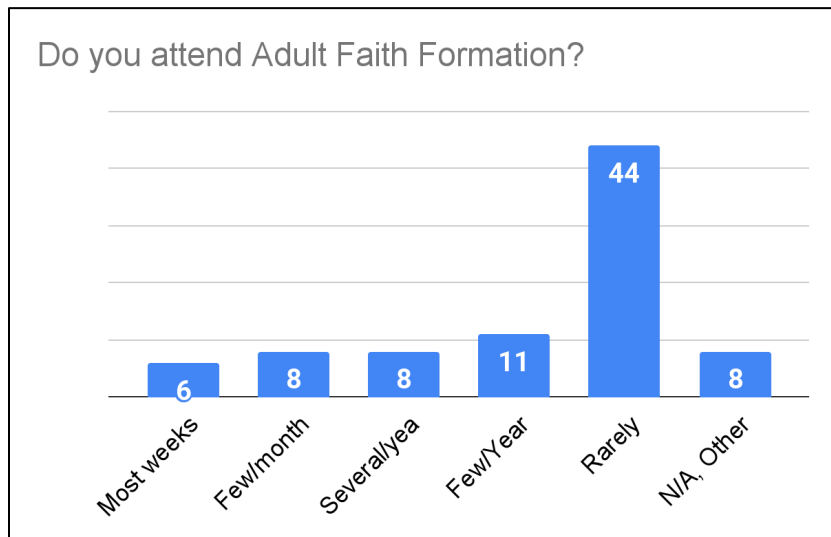
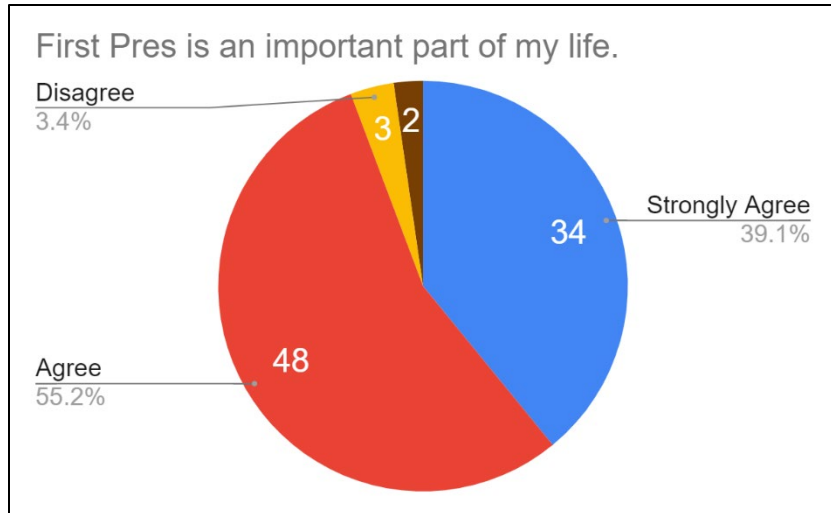
Which aspects of First Presbyterian Church mean the most to you?



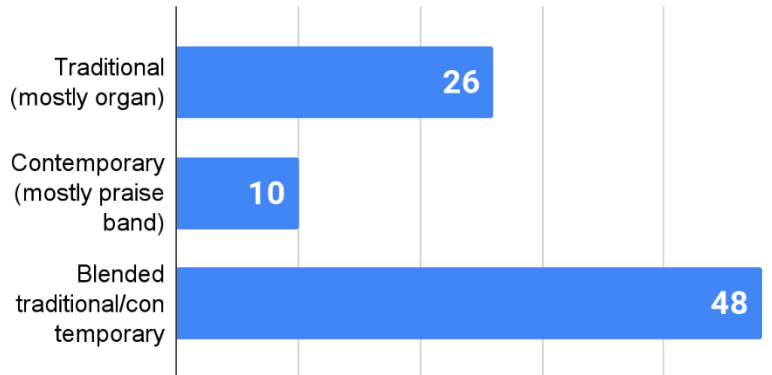
WordItOut

What three words describe our church?

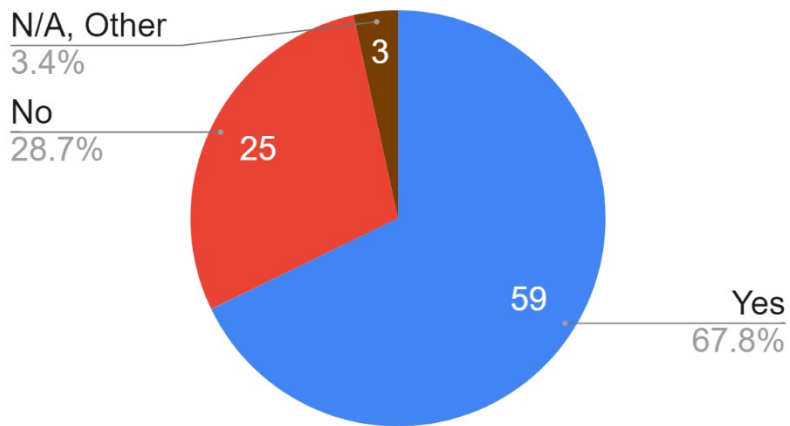




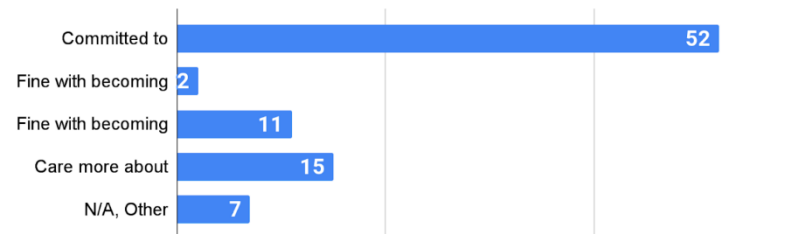
What type of service do you prefer?

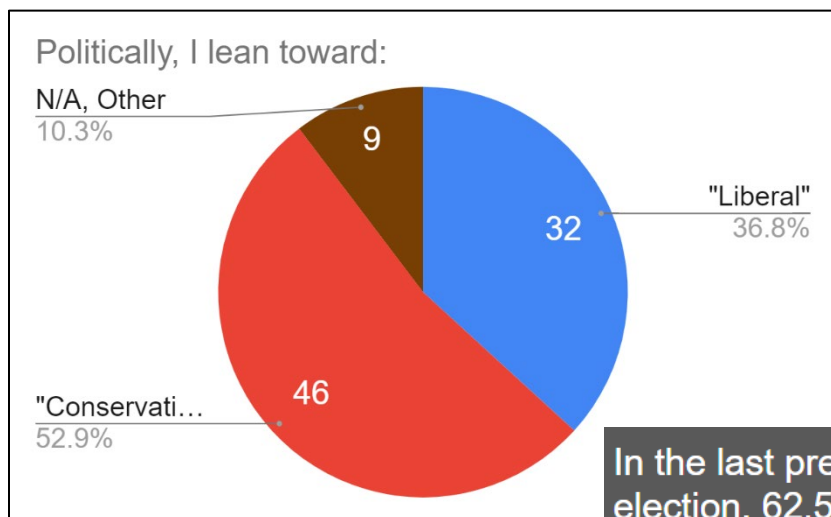
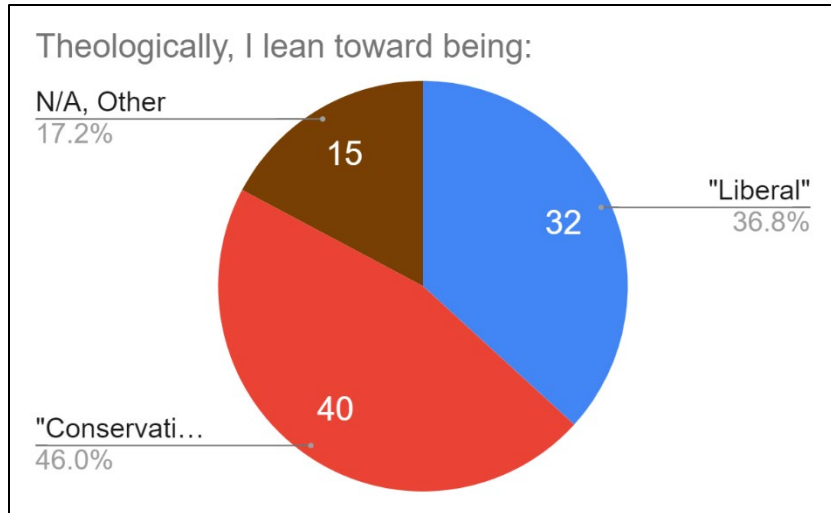


Do you feel knowledgeable about Presbyterian beliefs?

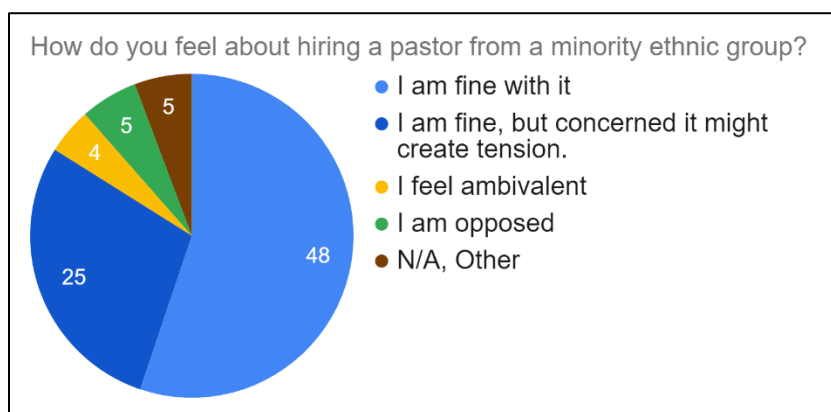


How do you feel about belonging to PC (USA)?

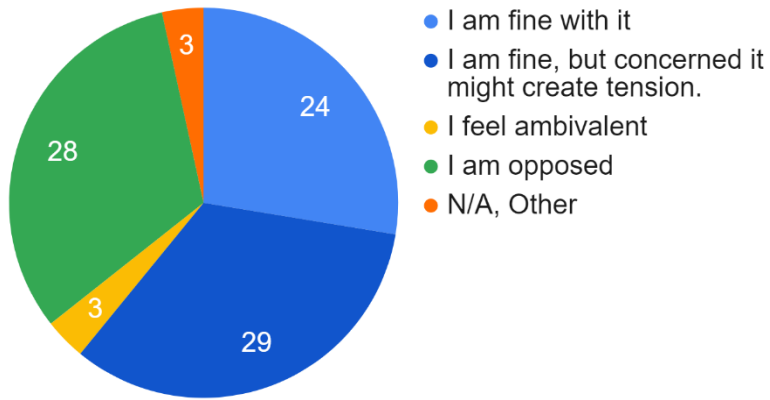




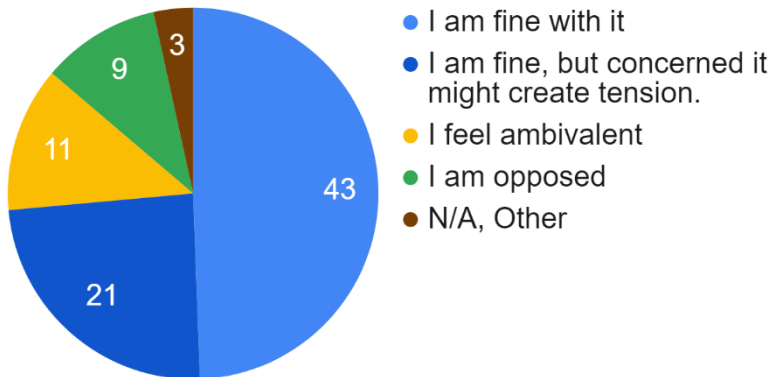
In the last presidential election, 62.5% of FDL County voted Republican



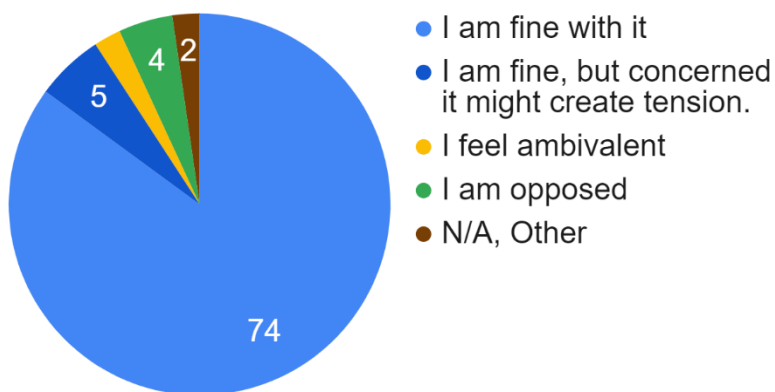
How do you feel about hiring a LGBTQIA+ pastor?

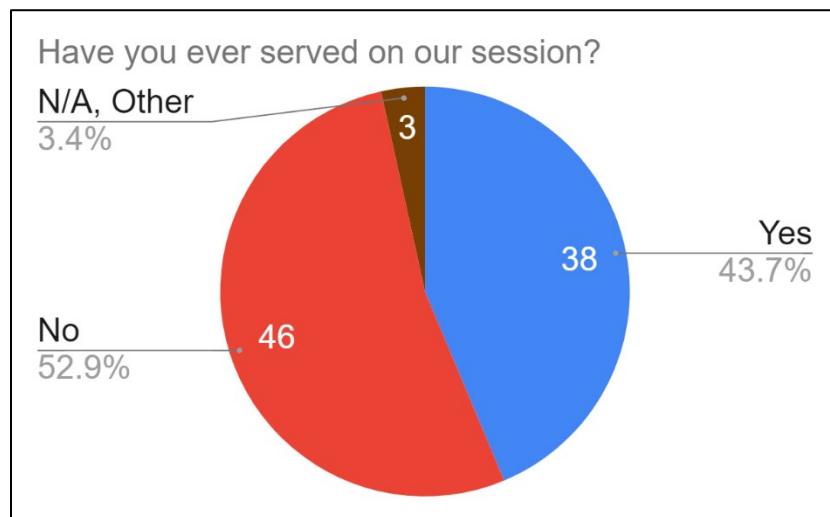
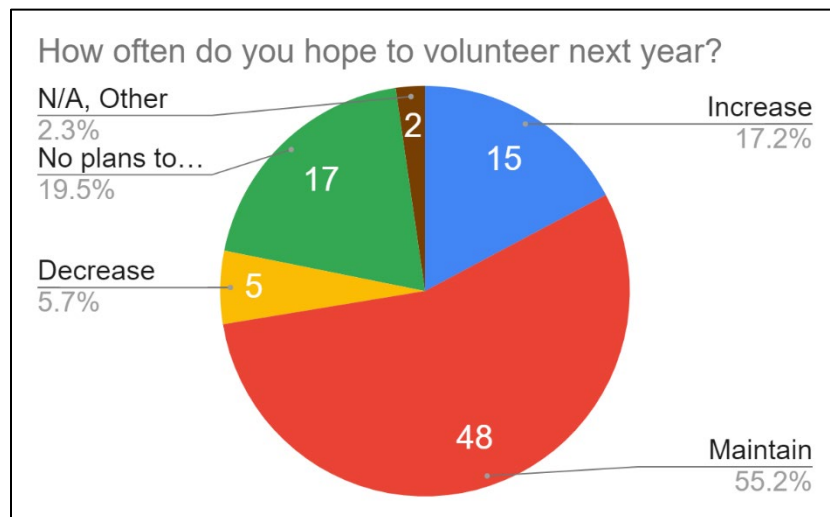
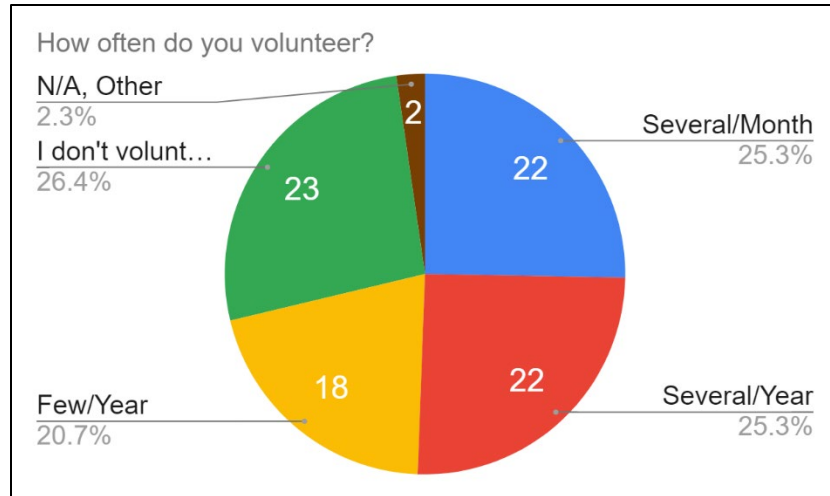


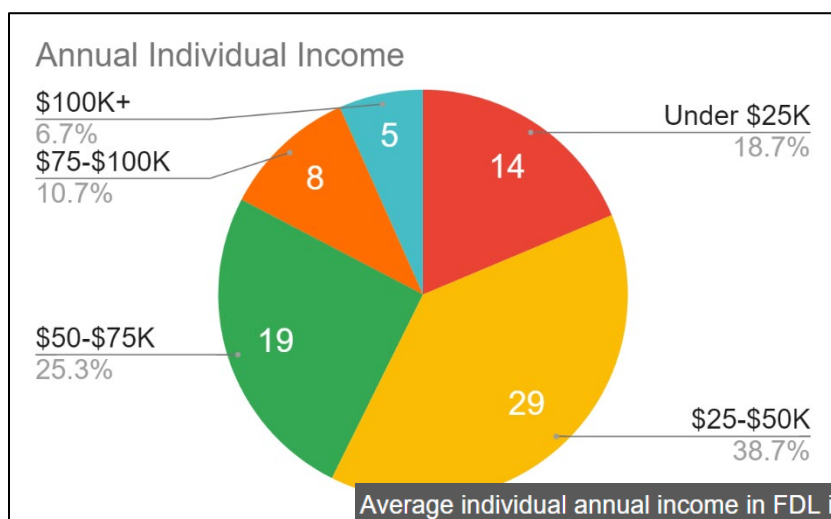
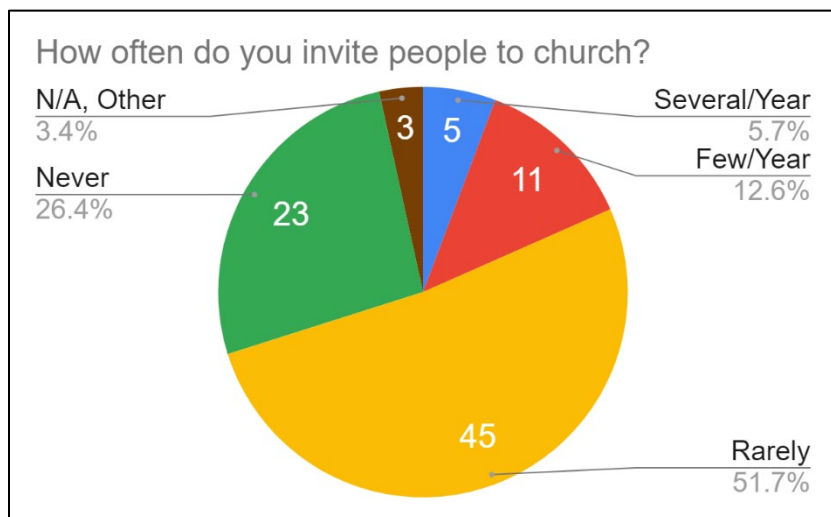
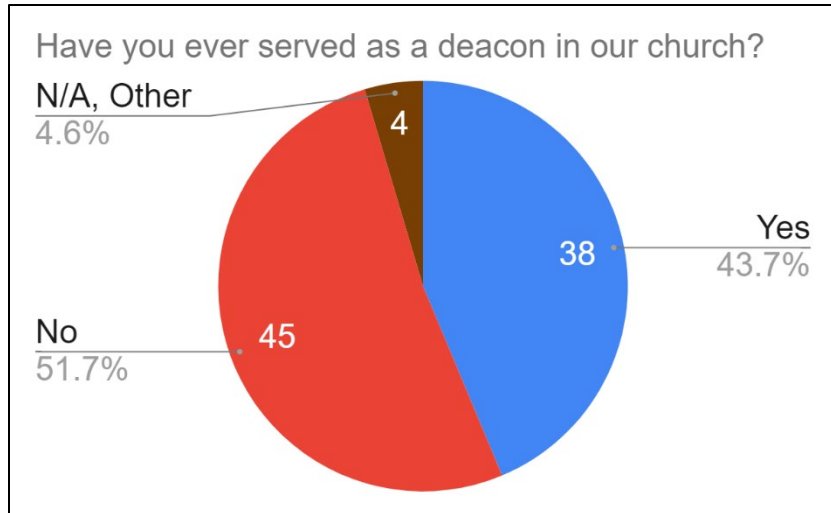
How do you feel about hiring LGBTQIA+ staff (not pastor)?



How do you feel about hiring a female pastor?

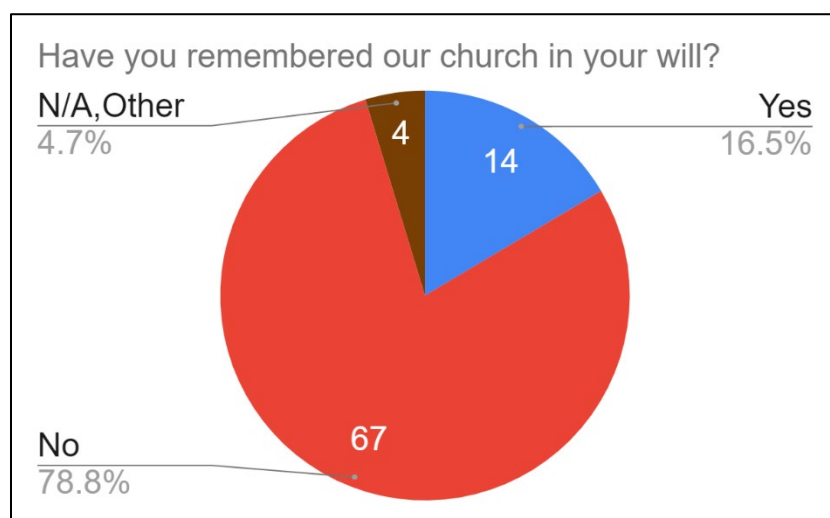
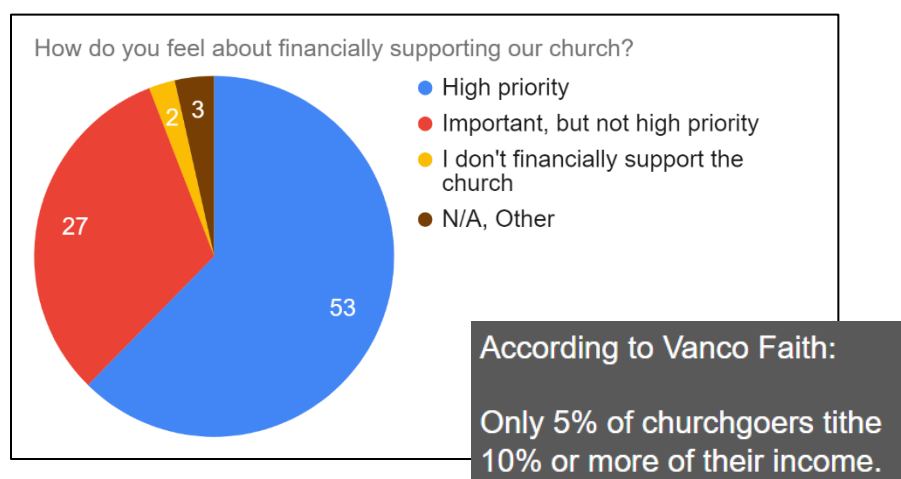
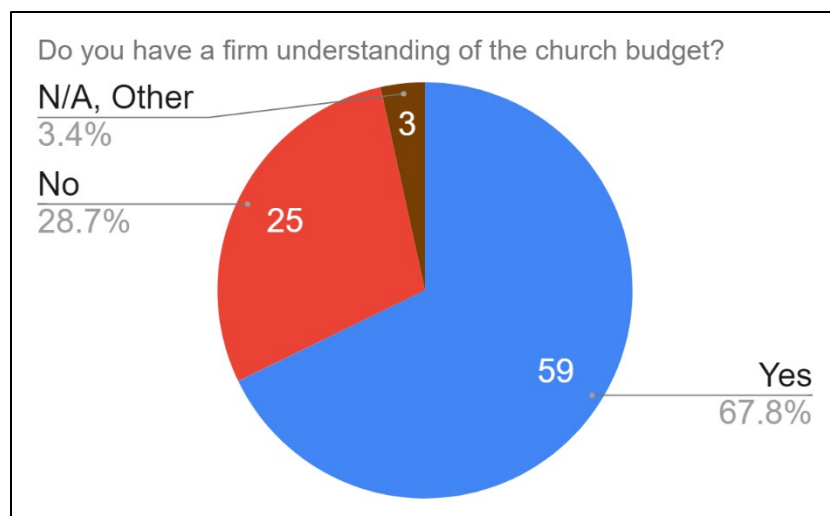


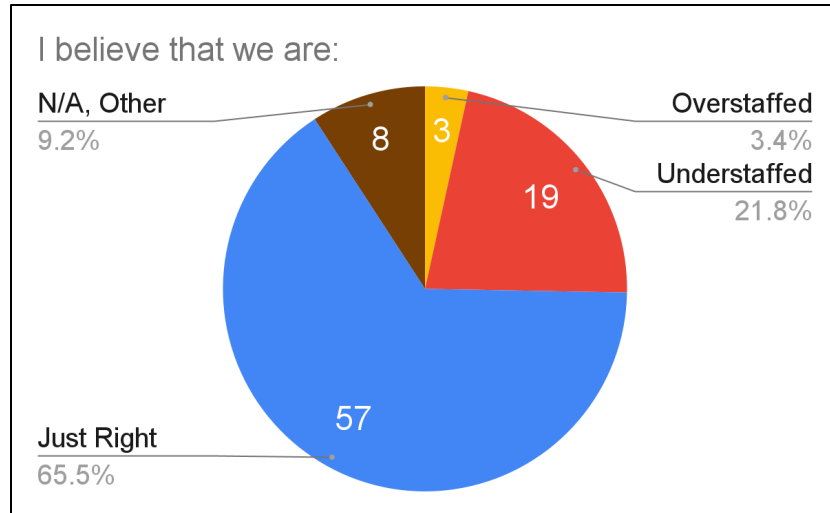




Average individual annual income in FDL is \$38,320

Average total household annual income in FDL is \$68,292





According to Vanderbloemen, the average church spends 52% of their budget on staff compensation, with 60% on the high end.

<https://www.vanderbloemen.com/blog/cost-efficient-employees-church>

RATIO OF WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE TO STAFF

Top 10%	1 staff: 133+ attendees
Above Average	1 staff: 95+ attendees
Average	1 staff: 77+ attendees
Below Average	1 staff: 50+ attendees
Bottom 10%	1 staff: less than 50 attendees

Position	Number of Hours	We have the equivalent of 4.8 full-time staff This equals: 1 staff: 18 attendees
Financial Assistant	28	
Communications Coordinator	24	
Contracted Cleaning Crew	20	
Pastor	40	
Director of Christian Education	40	
Worship Coordinator	40	
	192	We spend 69% of our total budget on staff.
192 total hours/40 hours	4.8	



WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHO SHOULD LEAD US?

Over the course of two Sundays, the Congregational Mission Study Team held three visioning exercises during worship. The first exercise drew on a paraphrased version of the Six Great Ends of the Church (see Book of Order F-1.0304). Those present were instructed to choose the three Ends that they thought were the most important for us as a church going forward. Which were the three that we felt God wants us to put most of our energy and effort into? The results were:

- 1 - Providing for the Physical and Spiritual Needs of Individuals (62)
- 2 - Maintaining Regular Worship (53)
- 3 - Proclaiming the Good News of Salvation (40)

- 4 - Being the Visible Kingdom of Heaven on Earth (29)
- 5 - Advocating for Social Justice for the Oppressed (24)
- 6 - Safeguarding Spiritual and Moral Standards (19)

None of these Ends can ever stand alone. They are all intertwined, each depending on all the others. When we worship regularly, we are safeguarding spiritual and moral standards. Proclaiming the good news of salvation moves us towards providing for the physical and spiritual needs of individuals. Being the visible kingdom of heaven on earth requires advocating for social justice and proclaiming the good news of salvation.

The individual rankings tell us what our priorities are, but none of them can be avoided altogether. While we may concentrate on a few, each of them needs our attention.

In the second exercise, the congregation was given a list of ten items that we either talk about, spend energy on, or invest money in. In this case, those present were asked to choose the five items that they think are most important for us as a congregation moving forward. Which are the five items that we feel God wants us to put the most time and energy into? The results were:

- 1 - Caring for our Members and Friends (64)
- 2 - Local Missions (62)
- 3 - Children & Youth Faith Formation (58)
- 4 - Recruit New Members (57)
- 5 - Adult Faith Formation (47)
- 6 - Fellowship Activities (38)
- 7 - Building Maintenance (34)
- 8 - Music Ministry (28)
- 9 - Mission Trip (10)
- 10 – Landscaping (0)

As with the Great Ends, none of these can stand alone. They are all interconnected. A church has to put resources into landscaping. We say we want our church to recruit new members, but visitors are never going to enter a church that looks like a vacant lot. We have to have attractive landscaping. Also, a well-maintained church lifts everyone's spirits but a church with maintenance issues looks like no one cares about it. New members get to know their congregation at fellowship activities. Music (and it doesn't matter what kind so much as doing it well) creates a sense of unity and enhances esprit de corps. We want our children and youth to grow in faith, but the reality is that parents (and grandparents) spend more time with their children than we do. If we want children to grow in faith, we must help their adults grow in faith, also.

The individual rankings reveal what our priorities are, but none of them can be avoided

altogether. We may concentrate on a few, but each item needs our attention.

In the third visioning exercise, the CMST presented twenty desired pastoral skills / attributes. (Many of these came from the standard Ministry Information Form our Pastor Nominating Committee will use. The rest were generated by the CMST.) Those present were instructed to choose the ten items that they thought were the most important for our next pastor to have. Which were the ten that we felt were most important for us going forward? Which were the ten our next pastor would most need to guide us in the direction we believe God wants us to go? The results are:

- 1 - Preaching & Worship Leader (61)
- 2 - Good Communicator (59)
- 3 - Motivator/Encourager (54)
- 4 - Heart for Children & Young Families (50)
- 5 - Skilled in Pastoral Care (45)
- 6 – Collaborator (44)
- 7 - Wants to be a visible presence in our community (42)
- 8 - Heart for Mission Work (Being the hands and feet of Jesus) (41)
- 9 - Heart for Proclaiming the Good News (40)
- 10 - Not afraid of sensitive topics (Money, Politics, Sexuality, etc.) (39)
- 11 – Hopeful/Optimistic (39)
- 12 - Heart for Christian Education (36)
- 13 - Good Administrator (36)
- 14 - Heart for Older Adults (35)
- 15 – Heart for Music Ministry (24)
- 16 - Change Agent/Facilitates Change (15)
- 17 - Second-Career Pastor with real-world experience (did not become a pastor until somewhat later in life) (10)
- 18 - Risk Taker (8)
- 19 - Technologically Savvy (8)
- 20 - Funds Developer (2)

Perhaps not surprisingly, the results indicate that our greatest desire is for a strong preacher/worship leader. This person will also be a skilled communicator (both oral and written) with the ability to motivate and encourage us. Additionally, this individual must have a keen interest in families with young children. (Notice the correlation with “Ten Important Things” item 3 and “Great Ends” item 2.) These qualities are essential and anyone not meeting them would be hard-pressed to guide us in the direction in which we believe God wants us to go.

Items 5 through 11 are secondary, but still important, expectations. The fact that these seven items are separated by only six votes suggests that they are of practically equal importance. Together, they suggest a minister with traditional pastoral skills who especially desires to be with us both ministering out in the community and navigating the sometimes-sensitive realities of our world today.

Items 12 through 14, separated by only one vote, are important, though in this case tertiary, pastoral gifts expected in a well-rounded solo-pastor. We still expect them, and they matter to us, but less than those listed above.

“Heart for Music Ministry”, no. 15, received only twenty-four votes, eleven votes less than “Heart for Older Adults” and nine votes more than “Change Agent/Facilitates Change.” These are the largest gaps in the survey. We believe that this indicates that, while we recognize music is important and we value it greatly, we do not expect the pastor to oversee it. Being supportive is sufficient.

CONCLUSION

The city of Fond du Lac is situated at the southern tip of Lake Winnebago in East-Central,

Finally, the results suggest that the final five items, while admirable, do not seem to us to be necessarily key to our future.

No pastor does everything well. To expect otherwise is to set oneself up for disappointment. Are we willing to do without a particular item when the candidate excels at everything else? For example, would we be happy with a pastor who seems to excel at each of items 1 through 14, except pastoral care? Are we willing to provide the technical expertise needed to support a pastor who is exactly what we need but who struggles with technology?

These are important considerations, and we trust that our PNC will consider them prayerfully and discuss them frankly with serious candidates.

Conclusion:

These exercises were not designed to provide blueprints for our future. Rather, they are a set of broad guides as to what we as a congregation believe God wants us to invest in, our understanding of the general direction in which we believe God wants us to go, and the kind of pastor we believe can best lead us on our way.

We hope that these exercises will help our Pastor Nominating Committee discern who will be the best pastor for our church. Sharing them with a prospective pastor would be a good way of learning what the pastor values and helping the pastor discern if we are a good fit for them. It would be tragic to call someone who is friendly, outgoing, a spellbinding preacher with proven experience in children and youth ministries, only to learn that their values are the opposite of ours.

Wisconsin. It is the county seat and largest city in Fond du Lac County. The original inhabitants

of this area included the Winnebago, Potawatomi, and Menominee tribes. The first white settlers arrived in the 1830s.

Today, Fond du Lac is a small city with a population of 44,283. The median age is 38.9 years and the majority of the population are white, followed by Hispanics. We are politically conservative.

Fond du Lac has myriad of educational opportunities. There are ten public elementary schools, four public middle schools, and two public high schools: as well as a number of private Catholic and Lutheran schools. We also have two universities and a technical college.

Our average income is \$38,320. Crime is lower than the national average. Employment, recreation, and cultural opportunities abound.

Fond du Lac boasts fifty-seven churches. One of those, and the only Presbyterian Church, is First Presbyterian Church of Fond du Lac!

FPC Fond du Lac was organized on February 26, 1855, and incorporated on December 31, 1901. In the beginning, our church had twelve members, no building, no funds, and no installed pastor. Because of the hard work of those early saints, they were able to build a church at Main and Rees Streets. In 1865, the church was moved to the corner of Sheboygan and Marr Streets. After experiencing several fires, brushes with fires, and rebuilding and remodeling, the church building was destroyed in a devastating fire in March 1996. But even as cleanup began, we were looking for a new place to build that would be accessible to all. Our present location was chosen, and construction completed in 1998.

Like almost all churches, our church has suffered from decreased attendance over the last twenty years. In 2000, membership was 582 and average weekly attendance was 300. In 2019 (pre-covid), membership was 338 and average weekly attendance was 121. Today, our

membership is 318 and our average weekly attendance is 85. In 2000, there were 179 children on our rolls. Today, there are only 24.

In 2000, there were 12 paid staff. Today we have 5 paid staff and a part-time custodial crew.

Support also has declined. Our 2000 income was \$371,201. In 2021, our income was only \$314,008.

In summary, since 2000 our membership has dropped by 45%, attendance has decreased by 73% and staffing by 60%. Furthermore, at our current rate of spending, within 2-3 years our checking/savings/stock assets will be depleted.

Our survey of our membership shows that two-thirds of us are over 55 years old. Two-thirds of us are married, though only a few have minor children at home. We are well educated, with 48% of us holding a bachelor's degree or higher, more than twice the Fond du Lac average.

We are a mixed-income congregation with members earning both well above and well below the city average. We value thoughtful sermons though few of us are interested in Adult Faith Formation. And though we think of ourselves as slightly conservative, we are more liberal than our city. 93% of us are comfortable with hiring a female pastor while 64% of us are comfortable hiring a LGBTQIA+ pastor. Financially, our dollars are low, but our giving is active. Overall, 95% of regular attendees give at least some financial support and 17% of us have remembered FPC in our wills.

Our major financial concern is for our staffing. We are well over the national average, spending 69% of our total budget on staffing. We have 1 staff person per 18 people attending on a Sunday morning. Our research shows us that the average church has 1 full-time staff person per 77 people attending on a Sunday morning. We realize that this is an untenable situation.

But though our finances are precarious, and our membership is down, we must remember to count our blessings.

- We are a financially mixed congregation and so are able to minister across economic barriers.
- We are very generous, quick to support local missions when the opportunities arise.
- We are well-educated, skilled, and creative.
- Our building and property are well-maintained, and we feel blessed to share them with our community.
- We have a strong relationship with local community organizations.
- Most importantly, we have a congregation who cares about our church, about our members, and about loving and supporting each other. The most popular word used to describe our church is 'welcoming'.

With this information in mind, we looked to our future. How shall we proceed? In which direction does God want us to go?

To determine how to move forward, we engaged in three visioning exercises. These exercises show that we have a wide variety of interests, but our clear priorities are worship and caring for individuals. And, perhaps not surprisingly, even though we are older, we have a heart for children and their faith formation.

Recommendation to the Pastor Nominating Committee:

Based upon our surveys and study, we recommend that our PNC seek a pastor who is a strong preacher and worship leader. This individual should be able to motivate us, encourage us, and increase the spirit of volunteerism in our church. Ideally, this person will have a strong interest in youth and young families.

We believe that we need a pastor who can guide us out of our financial maze by increasing our generosity and helping us right-size our staffing for spiritual and physical growth.

We firmly believe, and our study shows, that our motto is apt: "Christians Serving, Learning and Loving." Over the course of our ministry, we have experienced many fires, both physical and metaphorical: flames, wars, depressions, recessions, and Covid have all threatened us. And yet, we have come through them. With the Prophet Isaiah, we hold fast to God's promise:

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." (Isaiah 43:2, NRSV)

We know we shall come through this time as well because we are not traveling alone. God is with us.

