

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MARIETTA PNC CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY REPORT January 2017

In November 2016, the Pastor Nominating Committee conducted a congregation-wide survey to measure the congregation's level of participation, its views of the church's strengths and weaknesses, and what characteristics it hoped to see in the new senior pastor. With over 200 congregants responding, the following is a summation of their responses to 11 questions, plus demographic information gathered in the survey.

Please note the following which affects the numbers and percentages cited:

- 1) Not all responders completed every question
- 2) Some percentages do not add up to 100% because the questions permitted multiple selections

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDERS

Note: The percentages in the first table add up to more than 100% because responders indicated all age groups that applied to their household. The percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of responses per category by the total number of responders. For example, the first row states 6.3% of the respondents have infants or preschool age children in their household, not that of 6.3% of our congregation are infants or preschool age children. The second and third tables do add up to 100%.

Ages & Stages: Please check all that apply to your household.

Category	Percent
Infant/Preschool	6.3%
Elementary - Middle School	15.5%
High School to 25	10.3%
26 - 45	18.9%
46 - 55	17.8%
56 - 65	24.7%
Over 65	45.9%

Membership:

Category	Percent
Member - Currently a Member of FPC	74.8%
Attendee - Regularly attend FPC but not a member	5.5%
No Response	19.5%

Years of Attendance:

Less than 5 years	5-10 years	10-20 years	20+ years
8.5%	9.7%	19.9%	61.9%

CONCLUSIONS:

The majority of responders are long-time church members in the 56 years and up brackets. These are key stakeholders in the current and future church, both in terms of involvement and financial support. Younger age groups, 45 years and under, represent a significant percentage of congregants lost during the recent schism, with migration of some members and the senior pastor to ECO. Nearly 62% of the respondents have been members for greater than 20 years and just over 80% have been members for more than 10 years.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What activities do you and your family members participate in at FPC? (Please check all that apply to your household)

Note: The percentages add up to more than 100% because responders indicated all activities that applied to their household. The percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of responses per category by the total number of responders.

Category	Percent Participating	Category	Percent Participating	Category	Percent Participating
Wednesday Evening Activities	46%	Adult Music	21%	High School Programs	11%
Adult Sunday School	45%	Children's Sunday School	18%	Children's Music	10%
Church Officer	34%	Club 330	17%	Middle/High School Sunday School	9%
Councils/Committees	31%	Stephen Ministry/Shepherd	16%	Senior Programs	8%
Mission & Outreach	23%	Middle School Programs	13%	Nursery	8%
Hospitality/Greeter	23%	Children's Programs	12%	Middle/High School Music	3%
Other*	23%				

***OTHER ACTIVITIES**

The top four activities mentioned in comments were:

1. Fellowship Breakfast
2. Bible Studies
3. Chancel Guild
4. Volunteers

Other activities were:

Art class	MMO/Nursery	Intercessory Prayer Group
Foster Care Network	Interfaith Children's Movement	Presbyterian Women Today
Book Club	Writers' Group	Dinner Groups
Wine Group	Stewardship	Youth
MUST Summer Lunch	Martha Ministry	Track 25

CONCLUSIONS:

Besides worship attendance, the membership of FPC is actively engaged in a wide variety of activities ranging from the sharing of musical talents in and around the church to the support of a myriad of available volunteer services and participation in and enhancing of our own very meaningful Christian fellowship. The programs with the least amount of participation reflect the loss of a younger segment of the congregation.

2. Which activities do you feel could use immediate attention and improvement? (Choose up to 3)

Note: The percentages add up to more than 100% because responders were asked to choose up to 3 responses. The percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of responses per category by the total number of responders.

Category	Percent Perceiving Attention Needed	Category	Percent Perceiving Attention Needed	Category	Percent Perceiving Attention Needed
Worship-Contemporary	29%	Worship-Traditional	12%	Greeters	4%
Other*	25%	Middle/High School Sunday School	12%	Adult Music	3%
Wed. Night Programs	22%	Adult Sunday School	12%	Nursery	2%
Senior Programs	20%	Middle/High School Music	10%	Hospitality	2%
Mission & Outreach	20%	Children's Programs	9%	Stephen Ministry/ Shepherd	2%
High School Programs	17%	Children's Sunday School	8%	Club 330	2%
Middle School Programs	13%	Wednesday Night Meals	8%	Children's Music	1%

***OTHER PROGRAMS WHICH NEED IMPROVEMENT**

The top three areas mentioned in comments were:

1. Family/Young Adults (25-40)
2. Middle School
3. Volunteers

Other areas mentioned for improvement were:

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Homebound Visitation | Website | Sunday School for older adults |
| Community Events | Wednesday Nights for Preschoolers | Visitor Follow-up |
| Scouts | | |

CONCLUSIONS:

The areas hit hardest by the loss of young families are precisely the areas that are perceived to need the most attention – children, youth, high school and young adults. Retaining young families in the congregation is a priority, as they represent the long-term sustainability of the congregation. Respondents also commented that new opportunities for improvement exist on the other end of the age spectrum, which reflects the aging majority of our congregation. Some activities identified to be in need of attention were related to staff reduction, resulting from financial strains following the recent schism.

3. Which Worship Service do you prefer to attend?

Service	Percent
8:30 AM Service	23%
11:00 AM Contemporary Service	10%
11:15 AM Service	67%

CONCLUSIONS:

The 8:30 traditional service in the sanctuary has a strong and consistent core of attendees. The 11:00 a.m. contemporary service in the sanctuary has continued to lose attendees, particularly since August 2016. The 11:15 traditional service in the Great Hall has a strong and consistent core of attendees. This is the service in which special events and music are provided. Weekly attendance at all three services can be affected by special programs scheduled in the Great Hall, which has more seating capacity.

4. From what do you receive greatest inspiration in Sunday worship services? (Choose 3)

Note: The percentages add up to more than 100% because responders were asked to choose 3 responses. The percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of responses per category by the total number of responders.

Category	Percent of Total Responders
Preaching	89%
Special music (choirs, instrumentalists, soloists)	60%
Christian fellowship	43%
Reverent setting	29%
Congregational singing	29%
Scripture readings	19%
Common prayer	13%
Communion	13%
Other	8%

Note: The following table was calculated differently. After determining the total number of responses (remembering that respondents could choose multiple categories), the responses per category were divided by the total number of responses. Significantly, the order remains the same.

Categories	Percent of Total Responses
Preaching	29%
Special music (choirs, instrumentalists, soloists)	20%
Christian fellowship	14%
Reverent setting	10%
Congregational singing	9%
Scripture readings	6%
Common prayer	4%
Communion	4%
Other	3%

CONCLUSIONS:

Preaching is the primary inspiration during Sunday morning worship. Music, in the many forms it is expressed at FPC, is significant, along with Christian fellowship experienced by so many during communal worship. Sundays with special music offered bring in a “spike” of attendance. When children sing, parents are drawn to attend.

5. In a sermon, which of these is most important to you? (choose 3 with 1 being most important)

Note: The following table was calculated by determining the total number of responses per category (remembering that respondents were to choose 3 categories and rank each category as 1, 2, or 3), then dividing the total responses per category by the total number of responses for the entire question).

Category	Percent
Application to everyday life	22%
Spiritual nourishment	19%
Scripturally based	16%
Intellectual stimulation	13%
Engaging	10%
Humor	9%
Challenge to the status quo	7%
Illustrations	4%

CONCLUSIONS:

Responses to the survey question about sermon content indicated that the three characteristics most important to the congregation were its potential application to everyday life, spiritual nourishment from the sermon, and the sermon being scripturally based. These characteristics were closely followed by intellectual stimulation from the spoken Word.

6. Choose 7 of the following items identified as critically important in our next senior pastor.

Note: The percentages add up to more than 100% because responders were asked to choose 7 responses. The percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of responses per characteristic by the total number of responders.

Characteristic	Pct.	Characteristic	Pct.	Characteristic	Pct.
Preaching ability	83%	Warm affection for congregants	48%	Values Christian fellowship	27%
Honesty and trustworthiness	77%	Scholarly sermon preparation	40%	Self-confidence	25%
Strong interpersonal skills	56%	Church growth and outreach	38%	Missions, local and distant	18%
Ability to lead large church staff	52%	Humility	34%	Civic involvement	12%
Active participation in congregational life	52%	Adaptability/open to change	30%	Financially astute	12%
Genuine personal pastoral care	50%	Teaching interests, spiritual growth	27%		

CONCLUSIONS:

Preaching ability was identified in the survey as the top characteristic needed in our next senior pastor. Honesty and trustworthiness would seem to be a given for a profession in ministry, but respondents to the survey believed that these traits must be listed as the next most essential characteristics for a pastor in a church which has experienced misrepresentation more than once. A pastor being genuine, warm, connected, and interested in all aspects of the congregation, both individually and corporately, was highly rated by the respondents. Being a pastor with administrative skills to lead a large, capable church staff was a high priority, both for the congregation and the staff. The pastor's adaptability and openness to change was noted to be important. While civic involvement ranked lower on the congregational survey scale, staff indicated that they would like to have a pastor who represented the church in the community.

7. As FPC Marietta seeks to grow in membership in the future, what do you see as the best way? (Choose 1)

40% - Extend invitation to include the broader community around the church
26% - Personally invite friends, neighbors and family to join us
24% - Create new ministries that will appeal to more people (please suggest in comment section below)*

AREAS FOR GROWTH:

***The top five items mentioned in comments were:**

1. Young Families
2. Youth
3. Seniors (especially the increasing number of senior residential communities)
4. Follow-up with Visitors
5. Singles (young and older)

Other items mentioned were:

- Special Needs Ministry
- Mission Activities (i.e. Habitat, homeless and other social service ministries)
- Partnerships with more diverse congregations
- Drama/arts program

CONCLUSIONS:

FPC loves an occasion to invite others to worship. This centrally located church is within walking distance of many desirable, nearby historic neighborhoods. We invite families whose children attend our Club 3:30 after school program to special events. We display signage advertising special events at one of the busiest corners of Cobb County. We regularly invite outside groups to use our facilities. We hosted Stop Hunger Now which attracted a large group of volunteers from the community via Rotary and Boy Scouts. We are home to the Cobb County chapter of NAMI, a support group for families with mental health issues and a community genealogy group. Until recently, FPCM was the home to the Cobb County Foster and Adoption agency meetings. We are pleased to bring groups and individuals into our facility where each might find spiritual support. Several respondents commented that our church could improve our follow-up with the many who come through our doors every week.

8. As we seek to serve God's kingdom in ministry, what do you believe are the most important for FPC? (Choose up to 3)

Note: The percentages add up to more than 100% because responders were asked to choose up to 3 responses. The percentages were calculated by dividing the total number of responses per category by the total number of responders.

68% - Encourage deeper relationships within FPC (e.g. small groups, shared meals, etc.)
53% - Serve the community around us by building partnerships with other churches and agencies
48% - Expand our current outreach ministries, such as Club 3:30, MUST Summer Lunch, Food Connection
43% - Develop ministries for those impacted by life situations (finance, relationship, substance abuse, disabilities)
28% - Create new outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society
24% - Provide for spiritual development and training of members for ministry
11% - Expand international mission and ministries of the church

CONCLUSIONS:

In the aftermath of the denominational split, many members seek deeper, more trusting relationships within the family of FPC, and this was noted to be of the highest priority from respondents. In contrast, congregants expressed a strong desire to expand beyond our walls through new partnerships with local and regional church neighbors, furthering outreach ministries already in place. Examples of such outreach ministries include our own Club 3:30, MUST Summer Lunch, Food Connection, Mexico Mission, and the many agencies with whom this congregation is currently partnered. With growth in membership, it is possible that many new areas of ministry, mission, and service can be incorporated into FPC's rich portfolio of offerings.

9. What brings people to FPC and what keeps them here?

Most commonly mentioned in this narrative question:

Music, preaching, worship	Sense of belonging	Relationships
Shared values and experiences	Friendliness, friendships	Fellowship, hospitality
Love and caring	Youth	Mission and service
Traditions and history	Location	Staff
Friendliness of pastor	Programs	Contemporary worship
Inclusiveness		

With music, preaching, and corporate worship being reported as the primary reasons most visitors initially come to FPC, not far behind in priorities are the relationships quickly formed through fellowship, hospitality, volunteering, and service. The friendliness of this congregation invites visitors to return, and shared values and experiences tend to keep them here. As well, traditions, history, children's and youth programs along with the central geographic location enjoyed are key factors leading people to want to stay at FPCM. A sense of inclusion, community, caring, and kindness was noted as important to newcomers, as well as the friendliness of the pastors. Great appreciation was expressed in this survey for staff continuing to maintain this well-functioning church home we enjoy.

10. What is on your heart that you would like to share with the PNC?

General comments most often mentioned in this narrative question:

- We have been through a hard time - the refiner's fire. God has not forgotten us. He has strengthened us. Now he wants us to get to work!
- Good, alive church
- Great staff
- Proud of church
- Bring back FPC University
- Attract young families
- Partnership with other churches
- Always feel at home here
- Trusting relationships with new pastor and each other
- Accept one another and work together

Expectations for the new pastor mentioned in this narrative question:

- Youthful, family friendly, attracts young fathers, has a family
- Team builder
- Rebuilder
- Education, friendliness, suitable for our church
- Record of achievement, likeable, humorous, inspirational
- Caring, humble servant
- Good administrator
- Energetic, engaging and personal relationship seeker
- Honest, committed, and in good standing with Presbytery
- Sincere, warm, caring
- Strong leader
- Invested in all forms of worship
- Servant's heart
- PCUSA
- Healer
- Someone who loves the Lord