

FAIRMOUNT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CLEVELAND
HEIGHTS, OHIO

CHURCH SHOULD BE INCLUSIVE.
CHURCH SHOULD BE GENEROUS.
CHURCH SHOULD BE INNOVATIVE.
CHURCH SHOULD BE AUTHENTIC.
CHURCH SHOULD BE RELEVANT.



SURVEY REPORT

Fairmount Presbyterian Church

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 CONVERGENCE

COLLABORATING FOR THE COMMON GOOD

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OUR PARTNERSHIP

Convergence US has partnered with Fairmount Presbyterian Church for Assessment services. This report contains the data from your church assessment, an analysis of the data, and creative thinking about what the church could consider as they determine their future.

CHURCH DATA

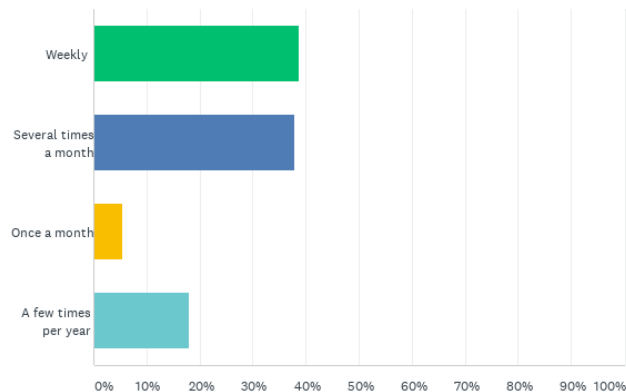
MEMBERSHIP AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Fairmount Presbyterian Church has approximately 450 people who participate in some way in the life of the community. The church has 2 worship services a week, which have had an average of 175 people in attendance over the three months prior to the recent shutdown. Approximately 95% of those in worship are the same people week after week.

Fairmount Presbyterian Church currently averages 5 visitors per month. In the last year, 5 adults and 15 youth have joined the congregation.

The number of people engaged in some way with the congregation has decreased from 550 five years ago to 450 today, a sign the congregation has experienced a slight decline in recent years. The weekly attendance is decreasing over time, from 244 in attendance 5 years ago to 175 over the last year.

Q7 How often have you attended worship or another church event in the last six months?



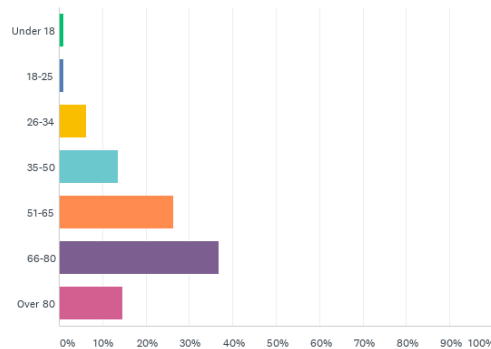
39% of congregational survey respondents report attending weekly, with 44% attending at least once or several times a month. This is not uncommon in today's church settings, as people who consider themselves very involved now attend only 1-2 Sundays a month on average, due to increased travel and family obligations. Therefore, you will need twice as many people involved with your congregation to see worship attendance that was possible 10 years ago with half as many involved folks.

The survey respondents varied widely in their comments on what service they mostly attend, including comments on their displeasure at particular service times, so it was not possible to get a measure of any one service being more common among respondents than another. Your leader and member surveys noted that there have been some transitions and conflict which likely affected attendance in recent years, maybe even regarding the times of worship. Getting past this in healthy ways may be key to reaching new members.

CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS

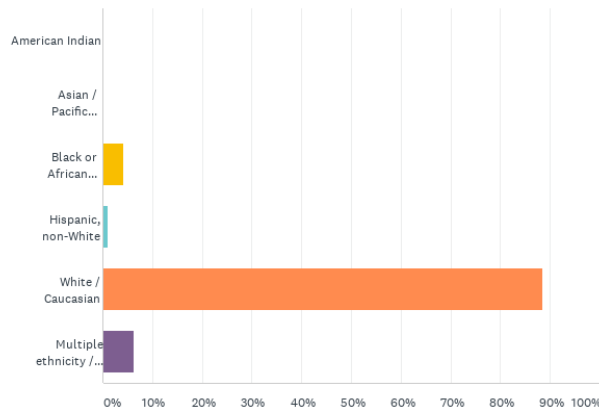
The pastor reports that your church's current congregation is diverse in age, with 20% under 19, 47% working age adults, and 33% of the congregation over 65. Among the 110 congregational survey respondents, 47% were working age adults, and 52% were over 65. This proportional difference could be because only adults were invited to take the church survey. It is also possible older adults were more likely to take the church survey. The ages of those on the governing body of the church are younger than the congregation as a whole with 25% being over 65 and 65% being working age adults. 29% of respondent households contain children, and 70% of respondent households contain senior citizens.

Q33 How old are you?



The 110 congregation members responding to the question about race report identifying as 88% White (non-Hispanic), 1% Hispanic, 4% identifying as Black/African American, and 0% Asian. 6% identified as multiple ethnicity/other.

Q34 Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

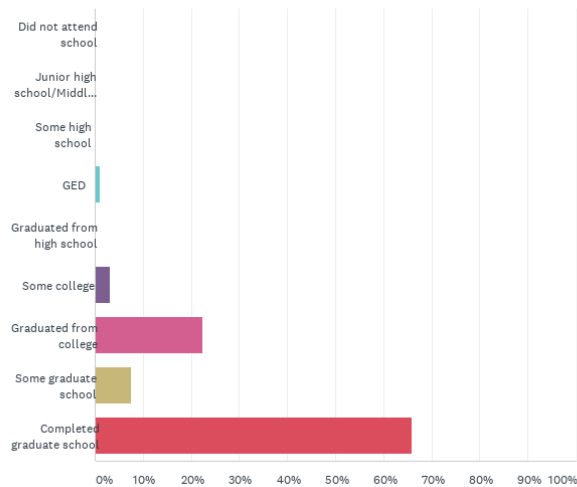


On the survey, 97% identified as heterosexual, 0% Gay, 0% Lesbian, with 3% identifying as bisexual or other. Respondents were 28% male and 71% female, with 1% identifying as transgender, intersex, or gender nonconforming.

Your congregation is highly educated, as 99% of respondents have completed at least some college. Almost 66% have attended or completed graduate school. Your

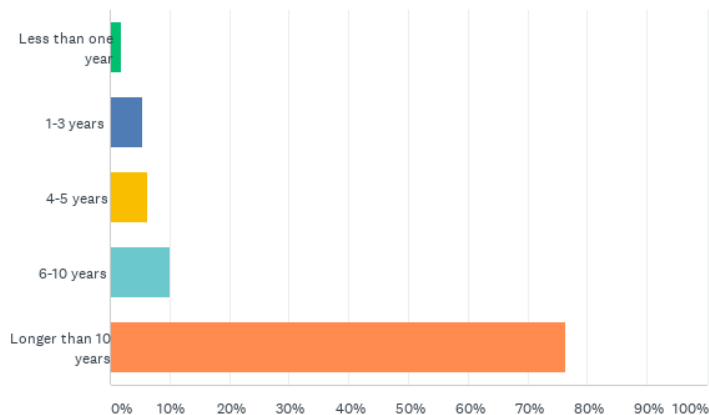
congregation is diverse in income: 55% of respondents report household incomes above \$100,000 per year, and 45% report incomes below that mark.

Q35 What is the highest level of education you have completed?



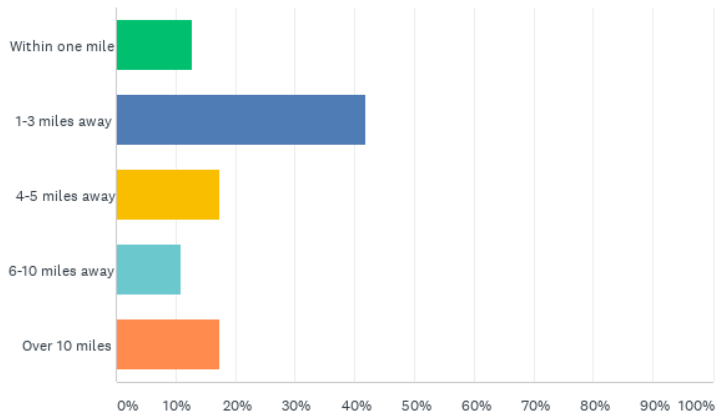
14% of respondents have been members less than 5 years, with 76% being members of longer than 10 years, and 2%, report joining within the last year.

Q2 How long have you been a part of this congregation?

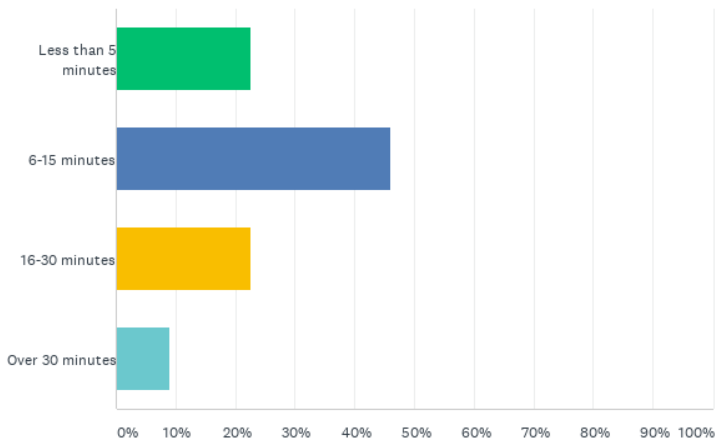


The majority, or 72%, live within 5 miles of the church, while only 17% of respondents live over 10 miles away. This means it takes most of the congregation 15 minutes or less to get to church. Only 8% of survey respondents find that travel time to church limits their participation.

Q3 Where do you live in relation to this congregation?



Q4 How long does it take you to get from your home to church in a car?



CURRENT CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The church holds approximately 4 non-worship activities per week. About 50% of those involved with the congregation take part in non-worship activities. Activities include:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Youth activities | Handbell Choir |
| Parent's Night Out | Children's Choir |
| 4th/5th grade evening | Monthly men's breakfast |
| Monthly book group | Food pantry visit |
| Weekly Bible study | Committee meeting night |
| Weekly walking group during Lent | Lenten study |
| Bi-monthly social justice event | Faithful Films Series |
| Breaking Bread | Sisterhood of Service |
| Connect | Prayer Shawl Group |
| Church Choir | |

CONGREGATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

Survey respondents indicated mostly positive opinions on the congregation and its situation. Over 80% of respondents felt the church:

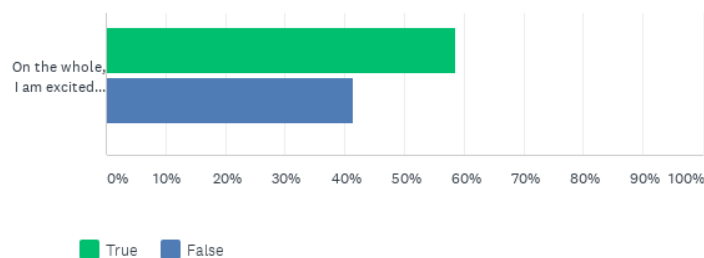
- Holds strong beliefs and values
- Supports vibrant ministries through the financial and time investments of its members
- Supports members in developing spiritual practices
- Engages all the senses in worship
- Is working for social justice
- Is spiritually vital and alive
- Has worship that makes them think
- Has worship that inspires awe
- Has worship that calls me to action

A large majority of respondents agreed that the church:

- Has a clear mission and purpose
- Successfully engages people of all ages
- Is a source of learning for adults
- Is a source of learning for children
- Is a source of learning for youth
- Builds relationships among members

81% believe that Fairmount Presbyterian Church is like a close-knit family. This can be a good and a bad thing. Being too close knit can feel cliquish and close out newcomers, while being very distant from one another can prevent relationships from growing among your members.

Q18 Please answer the following questions true or false



Yet, only 59% of respondents are excited about where the church is headed. This leaves 41% who do not share that excitement, indicating some diversity in perceptions of the future of Fairmount Presbyterian Church.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Growing and renewing a church requires a deep engagement with spiritual practices. The most common practice among your members is individual prayer. Members who responded to the survey indicate somewhat frequent participation in individual prayer, meditation, or devotions, with over 94% doing so at least occasionally. This is the only

When asked, "What do you see or sense could hold you back as a congregation?," your members responded most often with words relating to change, the lack of a settled pastor, and a lack of members.



A full list of responses can be found in Appendix B: Survey Comments.

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

The Larger Area

We studied the neighborhoods near your church using the Mission Insite program.

In a report on the zip codes 44118, 44121, 44112, 44106, 44120 and 44122, which were provided as the most common among your members by your church staff, we found the following:

This larger area of 189,300 people is projected to lose over 5000 residents by 2024.

These neighbors are diverse in race, with 51% identifying as Black/African American, 40% as White, 4% as Asian, 3% as Pacific Islander, American Indian or Other, and 2% as Latino. This is more racially diverse than your congregation. It is worth examining if your congregation may have some blind spots in terms of community needs because these faces and voices are not represented in your congregation.

The average age in this larger area is increasing, but slower than the state average. The only population segment seeing significant growth is those 65 or over. However, while the average age is increasing, the population of younger school aged children is projected to grow slightly over the next 5 years. Also, among households with children, married couples are growing while single parent families are on the decline.

Incomes in this area are increasing, with an average household income of \$76,912 in 2019 projected to increase to \$85,925 by 2024. The largest growth is projected to be among households with incomes over \$200,000 annually. However, another group that will see some growth are lower income families earning \$25-35k per year. The racial disparities in

median incomes are stark, with Black/African American households averaging less than \$30,000 per year, and White households averaging over \$77,000 per year.

People in the area are more likely to have bachelors or graduate degrees than the state average. Your employed neighbors are predominantly white collar workers. Six occupations are represented at rates higher than the state average: building maintenance and cleaning, healthcare support, managerial executive, personal care, specialty professions, and protective services.

The largest segments of people in the larger area are labeled with categories such as:

Economic Challenges – Urban Survivors and Tough Times 17.9%

Suburban Style – Suburban Attainment 13.3%

Singles and Starters – Urban Ambition, Striving Single Scene, and Colleges and Cafes 12.8%

Golden Year Guardians – Senior Discounts and Town Elders 6.6%

Aspirational Fusion – Hope for Tomorrow 6.3%

Do you see a theme here? While there is certainly a group of people achieving their Suburban dreams, there are many others who are struggling, from those living in poverty to those just getting their start in adult life, to those who are surviving on a fixed income as seniors. Learning more about each of these groups will help with your discernment as to how best to serve and engage your community.

The greatest concerns of those in these zip codes are financial matters, retirement, losing weight and other health crisis or concerns, and reaching goals/being successful. Other strong concerns include fear of the future, having a satisfying job/career, stress and finding time to relax, and making the right choices/finding direction. Those who believe in God tend toward a strong belief that God is love and invites the world into a loving relationship. Your neighbors agree with tolerance as a necessity for social peace and well-being. They also strongly believe that the US is losing its place in world leadership, has a moral responsibility to be a force for good in the world, and that we must give attention to environmental stewardship and economic justice. Those who are seeking a faith community are looking for warm and friendly encounters, quality sermons, opportunities for volunteering, and social/holiday activities. There is a moderately strong preference for traditional worship, family activities, and involvement in social causes.

Your Immediate Neighbors

We also ran a report on the 1-mile radius around your church. This population differed significantly from the larger area above.

This area has a population of 16,420 people and is projected to decline by about 500 people by 2024. The area is 62% White, 24% Black/African American, 9% Asian, 3% Pacific Islander/American Indian/Other, and 2% Hispanic/Latino. This area is growing in the segments of 65 and over and children 5-17 years old. Growth in the percentage of lower elementary children is projected in your area over the next 5 years. 76% of households with children are headed by a married couple.

The average income in this 1-mile radius is \$47,949 per capita, and \$105,751 per household, and higher incomes are projected to increase faster than lower incomes in this area during the next 5 years. Like the larger area, there are stark differences in average incomes

between White and Black/African American households in this radius, with the average Black/African American household earning less than half of White households.

Approximately 13.5% of residents in this area have at least some college, with 25% having a bachelor's degree and 44% having a graduate or professional degree. This is significantly higher than the larger area around your church and significantly higher than the state average. 85% of workers in your area work in white collar professions.

The largest groups in this smaller area are:

Singles and Starters: Striving Single Scene, Urban Ambition – 19.7%

Power Elite: American Royalty, Platinum Prosperity, Kids and Cabernet – 13.9

Young City Solos: Urban Edge, Status Seeking Singles – 11%

Booming with Confidence: Silver Sophisticates, Aging of Aquarius – 10.6%

Thriving Boomers: Full Pockets, Empty Nests – 10%

This paints a picture of a neighborhood with younger people alongside younger Baby Boomers, all with significant financial resources or on their way there.

The interesting thing is how closely this group resembles your members in age, education attainment, and income levels. It is worth considering if this nearer group might be more likely to be seeking a church home like yours, even as you might make the larger area detailed above a focus for serving others or working for justice.

If you were to try to meet the needs of these neighbors, they are most concerned with financing the future/savings/retirement, losing weight/diet issues/ reaching my goals/being successful. Those seeking a congregation would be looking for warm and friendly encounters, quality sermons, and volunteer/social opportunities. They are skeptical of the judgmental, untrustworthy reputation of many churches. They have very strong beliefs in the importance of tolerance.

To read more about the people that make up your community, see Appendix A: Mission Insite Demographic Reports.

While strong community connections are not a magic bullet to grow a church, they are a mark of a vital church. Creating distinctive initiatives to add value to the lives of those in your neighborhood who have things in common with your members will help your congregation be known to those who may be seeking a Christian congregation. Being creative on how to meet the needs of the struggling people in your community should also be a priority. Meeting the needs of those neighbors may not end up with them attending worship, but is an important part of being a congregation grounded in the place where you are located. Such connections also generate the goodwill needed for community financial support of your congregation and its work, which is rapidly becoming an important segment of the financial picture for congregations.



NEARBY CONGREGATIONS

People in the neighborhoods surrounding Fairmount Presbyterian Church have over 20 churches to choose from. There are 4 Presbyterian churches and 3 other churches of your Presbyterian denomination listed in Cleveland Heights, 2 of which are More Light Congregations like you. There are at least 2 mainline protestant churches of other denominations with similar values within a few miles of your church building.

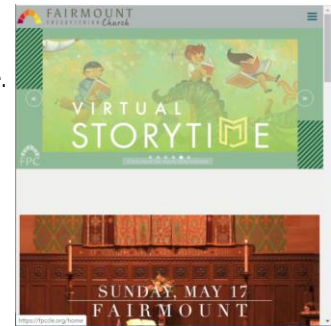
To grow, Fairmount Presbyterian Church will have to consider whether it has a unique mission and vision, one compelling enough to set it apart from all the other churches in its area, as well as how it communicates that mission and vision to the community.

COMMUNICATIONS

Fairmount Presbyterian Church communicates regularly using email, a website, and Facebook. The website is fresh and up to date. The content related to sheltering in place and spiritual practices at home is relevant and I would imagine greatly appreciated.



The Facebook page is lively and up to date. Interestingly, your Facebook presence is much more engaging during the time period since we have all been staying at home, when compared with the time period before that period. It is worth considering how you might carry this level of engagement forward even when the time comes to return to worship in our buildings. You have gained viewers of your online service and even when your



people come back together, continuing a strong digital engagement with your community will be essential to advance your ministry.

The emails sent through Constant Contact and your PDF newsletter are visually appealing and testify to a congregation that is busy living out its faith and connecting to its community. Good job!

Keeping all communications formats fresh looking and up to date is a great way to be welcoming to those seeking a church and to engage your members and those in your community in the programs of the church.

EXTERNAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We at Convergence believe a vital church is instrumental in changing their community for the better.

Fairmount Presbyterian Church engages in your community in several ways. Your leader survey indicates the top priorities for the church in the community are Youth, Education, and Poverty which were discerned by hearing from congregation members who live and lead in your local community and direction from local, regional or denominational organizations. The pastor reports 55% of the congregation took part in some action during the past year relating to these three priorities. The church twice provided fiscal or material support to these priorities and collaborated with other congregations or organizations on these issues 4 times during the past year. The church advocated 3 times for local or larger policies and/or programs in these areas in the past year, taking part in 3 public actions, 1 media engagement, and preaching 5 sermons on justice issues during that time. The congregation provided training on advocacy issues 4 times for adult members and 3 times for youth and children. Children and youth participated in action and advocacy twice in the past year. The community offered training or practical support to local community members once in the past year. Approximately 200 non-church members benefited from some aspect of the above support for your priority issues.



A notable experience with action and advocacy occurred after a stabbing at your church. The pastor reports: "we engaged with news outlets, first responders, the courts system. We also engaged with Greater Cleveland Congregations in a Criminal Justice action with a total of 1000 people, 40 from Fairmount."

The church shares space generously with 2 community groups in line with the congregation's values. Approximately 62 people from the local community are in the building for non-church related activities each month. Fairmount Presbyterian Church engages with at least 2 community partners annually, and 5% of the church budget goes to external organizations. The church participated in or supported intercultural or interfaith experiences 4 times in the past year.

Survey respondents are volunteering either in church or their community quite frequently, with some members reporting over 500 hours spent volunteering in the last 12 months, and most reporting at least 5 hours. Collectively, 75 church members reported volunteering over 4000 hours in church over the past year. As for volunteering in the community, 69 members report volunteering over 5700 hours in the past year (and those are just the ones we know about!). Your members also engage in political advocacy, with 40 respondents contacting their elected officials in the past year. 57 members attended educational or advocacy events on community issues as well.

Meaningful experiences in serving church and community reported by survey respondents included:

- I am communications / newsletter mgr for a non-profit library that's existed in Cleveland since 1892. I had previously participated in FPC as sunday school teacher, deacon, trustee, elder, and as a child, choir member. My mother started an endowment fund at the church, and I contribute to it when I can. My current involvement is low, except my wife and I actively engage a member who has no internet access to attend the pandemic online services with us via speaker phone.

- My son and I have found the youth ministry activities extremely helpful. Our ability to be part of a community together has been very important in our lives. The fun activities for the 4/5 and middle schoolers have meant a lot to us in making us part of this wonderful community.
- Volunteering at Hospice of the Western Reserve has taught me a new respect for life.
- Bible study,
- I have worked with a refugee individual and refugee family during the past 12 months who were "mentored" by FPC. Their adaptability, resourcefulness and, generally, positive outlook are quite remarkable in light of their background and difficulties in adjusting to American society.
- social justice
- I am an active volunteer both inside and outside Fairmount Presbyterian Church. I'm unable to quantify the number of volunteer hours I have committed in the last 12 months. It's too many to count.
- I enjoyed going to the Greater Cleveland Congregations meeting regarding prison diversion. I have volunteered in youth programming which is near to my heart.
- I am a Habitat for Humanity construction volunteer
- I coordinated a hot meal with our church and a Jewish congregation, I coordinate a group that packs lunches at the foodbank, I am active on the Serve Council, walked for hunger, helped with a Habitat House, coordinate a group that makes braille alphabet books for The Cleveland Sight Center, teach a therapeutic horticulture class to children at the Cleveland Clinic children's hospital, lead gardening for a summer camp for ADHD children, co-chair a perennial demonstration garden for the public, co-chair an herb garden at The Cleveland Botanical Garden,
- Serving at North Church in the Month of November
- Working out exactly how important music (caliber, choices, balance, as well as the texts' theology) is to me in worship.
- Moved two years ago to a politically and racially conservative community. I have reached out to state and federal representatives. Federal members have responded with written communication. Most do not represent my voice. I speak anyway. I vote in every election.
- I help plan and execute conferences on dyslexia, locally and nationally. A successful conference is meaningful and gratifying.
- In-home gathering to further work of GCC in dealing w delinquent, abandoned properties in Cleve Hts, collaborative effort to elect city council leaders in sinc w GCC mission
- SOS ministry has supported me in invaluable ways and allowed me to support others. Joining a book club in my community has been invigorating. Continuing to volunteer in a positive youth education program has been vitalizing.
- GCC Meetings; social protests
- Men's group mugs: prayer & social justice.
- Inviting those from other faiths 3x."
- Working with our refugees has been especially meaningful. GCC engagement has been meaningful also. Keith Mills' environmental work has been meaningful.
- member of music group at church; enjoy camaraderie and providing music for worship
- Attended climate change film presentation at John Carroll University religion class. Participated in climate change and health care presentations by local medical

professionals, that focused on effects on the poor. Gave 3 earth care presentations to fellow churches in our presbytery and at a presbytery meeting.

- This church is a member of an association of faith communities in the greater metropolitan area for the purpose of social justice issues, i.e., change of social /political structures rather than charities. I was instrumental in organizing church members for a large assembly to pressure politicians to take action in favor of a specific social justice issue.
- Attending city school programs helping stop bullying, address violence etc.
- I volunteer as an Observer in the Federal Immigration Court downtown Cleveland. It is humbling to see human beings subjected to this cruel system of "justice".
- Finding an excellent interim pastor
- I volunteer as the communications director of a secular library. This is an educational organization, and actually about 10 members of this group are from my church. I devote more time there than most members, but the "mission" is as fulfilling as when I was a teacher/deacon/trustee/elder at church.
- Greater Cleveland Congregation meeting
- Working on creating change for a parachurch organization around becoming an anti-racism institution and fighting against white supremacy

However, in spite of this impressive record of community service, only 37% of respondents believed the church is changing the surrounding community, and only 28% believed local people are in the church building on a regular basis. However, 78% did perceive the church as working with other organizations in the community for common goals.

This is all a great foundation for community engagement at Fairmount Presbyterian! You may want to work on measuring your impact on the community quantitatively, so that you will know for sure how your congregation is impacting your community positively through this work. Using this solid foundation to become a hub where those in the neighborhood can plug in to service and action in their community could be a way to connect with neighbors and meet their needs for volunteer opportunities.

FINANCES AND FACILITIES

FINANCES

The current church budget is \$1,120,665 per year. The tithes and offerings for the most recent fiscal year were \$729,243. This indicates a significant gap between giving and budget. When divided among the approximate number of working age and older adults connected in some way to the life of your congregation (80% x 450=360 people), this indicates an average giving level of around \$2000 per person annually. You had \$849,358 in tithes and offerings only five years ago, however, you had more people connected with the congregation at this time. To meet the budget, current members and friends will need to give at higher levels, as they may have done in the past, or the church will need additional people willing to invest in the life of your church and ministry. The church has additional endowment, bequests and/or investment funds of \$9,676,484. If you are not already, you will soon be reducing your reserve funds to support the church budget. If a giving increase does not happen the church will need to take a hard look at it's staffing plan.

Among survey respondents, only 37% see the church's finances in good or excellent

condition. This contrasts with five years ago, when 66% would have perceived the church's finances in difficult condition. This type of change in perception is understandable when running deficit budgets but can have a powerful impact on engagement and morale. Framing finances as a tool for ministry and impact rather than only about survival can help get people excited about risk-taking budgets.

And taking risks in service of God's calling is OK! People can be moved to invest in a powerful vision. However, if you are using your endowment to simply "keep the lights on," you may see things decline faster than you realize. Additionally, using these funds to sustain the church facilities and operations means these funds cannot be used for other purposes, such as bold new community initiatives that could engage and motivate members of your church and larger community.

Vital churches have annual giving that sustains their normal operations and use their assets for impact in their community and world. One way to increase this ratio of gifts to budget is, of course, to grow your congregation. Another way is to increase the giving of your present members, perhaps by enrolling most members in auto-giving, ensuring that scattered attendance patterns don't impact giving. A third way is to engage those in the greater community who support the work your church is doing in spirit to offer their financial support as well. We offer coaching and partnerships that can potentially help you take giving to your congregation to higher levels of sustainability and would be happy to talk to you about these options.

FACILITIES

Fairmount Presbyterian Church has facilities that are too big for the congregation and for their ministries, and in good/adequate to excellent condition according to the pastor and congregational surveys. Photos on your website show attractive spaces that appear well maintained. A site visit by Gregg Carlson of Convergence found facilities in good repair, though dated in some rooms, lacking in good interior signage, and accessible. Parking is more than adequate due to the church-owned lot across the street. 86% of survey respondents believe you have a building and parking that are both easy for newcomers to find.

Continue to be attentive to your space. Make sure it is clean, well-repaired, smells good (ask a stranger to come and tell you the truth, we develop a tolerance to smells over time), and is clearly marked as to restrooms, elevators, and other necessary spaces. All of this will ensure your welcome to those in your space is as warm in practice as it is intended.



WELCOME, CONFLICT, AND CHANGE

CONFLICT SKILLS

The pastor survey indicated that your church has experienced serious and major conflict during the last two years. 64% of survey respondents reported church conflict during the past two years, with 48 people labeling that conflict as severe and resulting in people leaving the congregation. According to survey respondents, the most likely reactions to conflict are deferring to the head pastor, negotiating to reach a solution, or avoiding the issue. 62% of survey respondents reported no training in conflict over the past 5 years.

With your congregational history, conflict skills will be essential for moving forward in healthy ways. Truthfully, any congregation working to grow or renew could benefit from conflict training, and since only a minority of your members report having any training in this area, this could be a very powerful part of the process as you all discern your next steps.

CONGREGATIONAL WELCOME

The church has approximately 5 visitors per month, and 74% of church members say they make it a point to speak to any new people present in worship. This is good, but ideally would be much higher. Going beyond basic welcome, 73% of respondents at least somewhat agree the church wants more members, 89% say the church wants to be racially and culturally diverse and 8% feel the church is welcoming to different races, sexualities, abilities, and genders. 59% of respondents believe the church loves the enthusiasm of people with new ideas. 66% of survey respondents report it is easy for new people to join existing church groups. Again, in this time of separation finding creative ways to engage new visitors to your digital space is an important next step.

Living up to your desire for growth with larger numbers of church members trained and ready to roll out the welcome by greeting new people and welcoming them into existing groups will make a huge difference in the perception of welcome by those who visit. If you need assistance in this area, our On-Demand Course entitled Radical Welcome could be a helpful tool for you.

OPENNESS TO CHANGE

Your congregation likely needs some assistance in becoming comfortable with change. In areas relating to openness to change, survey respondents indicated:

- 75% felt the church is willing to change to meet new challenges
- 75% felt the church embraces differences of opinion and belief
- 69% felt the church invites all members into visioning and decision-making
- 60% felt the church helps members make their ideas for ministry a reality
- 72% felt the church regularly does new things in worship

However, only:

- 45% felt the members of the church are willing to change in order to achieve shared goals
- 45% felt new ideas are always welcome at the church
- 43% felt they frequently talk about change during worship and other activities.
- 37% felt the church embraces change
- 29% felt the church is always ready to try something new
- 37% felt the church prides itself on an embrace of change and constant adaptation.

Additionally,

- Only 29% felt members are always willing to try something new at church
- 74% felt the church is more comfortable when things remain the same.
- And 70% felt putting a new idea into action takes a long time at your church

This all shows that change skills are something your congregation will need to work on. A church that is vital and growing will be willing to get out of their comfort zone and try new things to find points of connection with those who may come from different generations or cultures yet seeking faith and community. A vital church supports its members by helping them put new ideas into action in a timely manner. Newer folks, and new ideas from those new folks, can all work together to become the new thing God is doing in your midst. If your members can find the will to fully live into the openness to change they believe is a part of their church, they will be well positioned to make the bold choice to listen to God's call for how best to move into a new era.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Five recommendations could strengthen your church's vitality in the next year:

- **Hire a new Senior Pastor efficiently and well: Retain search coaching and support.** This next search for a settled Senior Pastor is a big deal for you. You need a particular kind of leader for this next phase, one who has enough ministry experience to understand system dynamics. Being "church" together is messy and often difficult work. It will take a certain level of emotional intelligence and experience to navigate you all forward at this point. We can help you navigate this effort through search coaching and support. Whether or not you engage such coaching, we encourage thoughtful discernment about the particular skills your next pastor will need to carry your church's mission forward into your future.
- **Build change skills: You are weary of change, but even outside of our current global crisis, change is inevitable.** Change will be an unavoidable part of your upcoming pastoral transition. To build skills for navigating change well, focus on preaching and teaching that highlight the scriptural wisdom such as the words from 1 John 4: "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another" and "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love." You may want to include in your pastor search a focus on calling someone who is skilled in healthy transition and navigating change.
- **Strengthen lay leadership and mission focus, no matter what happens with the pastor search.** This is a great time to clarify and update your Mission, Vision and Values. This will be essential in your search for a settled minister and as you carry your message into the community. This kind of work may generate some significant discussions but who you are and who you believe God is calling you to be and do in the world is critical. Once this is clarified, work with staff and lay leaders to ensure every leader is "on mission" in their particular area. This is no time for turf wars or competing visions, but a time where unity is crucial. This unified mission may not be to everyone's preferences. As you work to clarify it, conflict will arise. Some people may leave if the discerned priority is not their favorite. This is OK. Those who are willing to invest in your collective work together even if they don't get "their way" will be the people and leaders you need to live into your future. Our on-demand course on Conflict can help you navigate those aspects of mission clarification. The collective discernment process and handling conflict in healthy ways will build a culture of trust. Alignment on how to move forward will strengthen your congregation's unity and effectiveness.
- **Engage in your community, Get creative about your facilities, Set goals for impact and measure and celebrate that impact.** What is your collective work in the world? Whom do you serve? The demographics of your church and your immediate surrounding community indicate a demographic fit between those residents and your members, so maybe the answer lies in serving those in your community that look like you. Or maybe it involves serving those farther beyond your part of the city. We recommend that you conduct research with community leaders as you work to discern mission focus. Once you are clear on that mission, make sure you measure your impact in concrete ways, which will allow you to both celebrate wins and adjust as needed if your initial strategies aren't effective.
- **Fragile congregations in your area could be open to collaboration or merger as we come out of this crisis.** You have the facilities and staff to be a strategic partner. Many churches will be facing serious decline and even closure because the

pandemic has increased the rate at which their finances and members are declining. One possible path for these congregations is to collaborate or merge with more stable congregations in their area. This type of partnership takes thoughtful discernment and effort, and our Faithful Futures resources can help you navigate if and when such work is needed.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR FAIRMOUNT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH:

*The question for you as members and leaders of Fairmount Presbyterian Church is: **“are you willing to live into God's future”?** Our recommendations, born out of our expertise in the life cycle and renewal of churches, are for Fairmount Presbyterian Church to finish your pastoral search, work on conflict and change skills, get to know your neighbors - both those who visit and those who don't - and listen for the new thing God is calling you to do in the world through those relationships. All while ensuring your lay leaders, spaces and stewardship are setting a firm foundation for that future. If you get stuck, our consultants and coaches can help you make concrete plans for improving all these areas. Putting your energy into these things will help your already vital congregation grow more vital and transformational in the years to come.*

APPENDIX A: MISSIONINSITE DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Please see the attached demographic reports

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1915JZsuxs1xu5ccFugyYffVT2tE7eQFb?usp=sharing>

and the interpretive guide to the lifestyle segments here:

<https://missioninsite.com/missionimpact-guide/>

to understand more fully your neighbors and their needs.