



FAIRMOUNT

PRESBYTERIAN *Church*



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Mission Study

January 20, 2021



Session

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Rev. Lindsay Harren-Lewis, Associate Pastor

Konrad Binienda, Organist/Interim Music Director

Nancy Chism, Church Administrator

Danielle Everette, Hospitality Associate

Chris Fader, Coordinator of Children's Ministry

Sara Gresh, Financial Secretary

Peter Horth, Parish Associate

Jason Jedlicka, Interim Technology Coordinator

Beaufort Pogue, Building Manager

Christine Winters, Office Manager

Convergence Consultants

Rev. Gregg Carlson, Director of Contracted Services and Senior Consultant

Rev. Dr. Anna Hall, Director of Research

Committee on Ministry Liaison

Rev. Arvid Whitmore

Fairmount Presbyterian Church
Mission Study Report
March 2020 – January 2021

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this Mission Study is to guide us in stronger decision-making and goal setting for future ministry. To that end we have sought to clarify who we are as a church, articulate what we stand for, and explore why we operate the way we do. It's our hope that this Mission Study will provide useful and necessary information for Session, the congregation and candidates for our next settled pastor.

Goals and Objectives for our mission study:

- To dig deeper into the gifts, passions, and needs of our congregation and our neighbors.
- To strengthen connections within the congregation through small groups, including Bible study.
- To get to know our neighbors through community engagement.
- To experience worship which supports this period of openness and discernment.
- To dream about new directions and visions for our congregation.
- To engage the entire community in discernment and prioritization.
- To create practical plans for implementing new directions and visions.
- To start implementing the top-priority new directions and visions with concrete actions within the year.

Overview of Method

The congregation has experienced multiple transitions in the last twenty-five years, and has been challenged by staff changes, levels of stewardship, periods of moderate conflict, major changes in Christian religious education and membership decline. To create a unified, enlivening path forward, Session engaged an outside consultant to assist us in doing an extensive Mission Study. The consultant was the Rev. Gregg Carlson from the organization, Convergence (<https://convergenceus.org/>), formerly the Center for Progressive Renewal. Convergence supports the reshaping of organizations, congregations and leaders engaged in an age of movement from “organized religion” to “organizing religion”, driven by the values of an inclusive, progressive theological vision for a more just world for all. The Convergence consultation process began in March

2020. The process was radically different from what we initially imagined due to the pandemic, but we forged ahead and engaged larger numbers of the congregation than we anticipated in a completely virtual context.

The following elements were the basis for the Mission Study Report:

- Close correspondence with our liaison from the Committee on Ministry throughout the process, including two Congregational Summits.
- In-person training of 12 small group leaders on March 14, 2020 in the Convergence ReVision curriculum. The groups met for 8 weeks, guided by prayer and bible study.
- A congregational survey which received approximately 130 responses.
- A Congregational Assessment produced by Convergence, with insights derived from surveys, review of church records and extensive demographics.
- Launching of eight virtual small groups in the summer, which included Bible study.
- Discernment by Session after studying the Congregational Assessment and results of the small groups.
- The first congregational Summit, September 2020, with 70 participants choosing one of five groups facilitated by trained lay leaders. The purpose of the day was to turn toward action with the prayerful discernment of working groups.
- With the trust and endorsement of the congregation, four working groups met to do deeper discernment and planning in these areas:
 1. Re-engaging the community
 2. Re-connecting the church
 3. Embracing diversity and intentional anti-racism
 4. Becoming a catalyst for mission and social change
- A second congregational Summit was held in late November 2020 to determine the prioritization of the work ahead. All four groups presented detailed ministry plans.
- The Session and church staff are currently working on implementing the priorities (identified at the end of this document), including the promotion of practices and worship which address resistance to change and the value of persistence.
- Coaching for leaders occurred throughout the process.

Brief History of the Church

Fairmount was chartered in October 1916 and incorporated on 7 December 1917. It grew out of Sunday school classes, initially meeting in private homes and a real estate office. In June of 1915, the Presbyterian Union erected a small frame chapel on a lot at

the corner of Fairmount Boulevard and Coventry and held Sunday school classes in the new building. The Presbytery of Cleveland granted a charter to the Fairmount Presbyterian Church on October 23, 1916 and the first service was on November 5, 1916 for a congregation of 45 people. On September 5, 1917, the chapel was destroyed by fire after a lightning strike. Just three weeks after the fire, however, the congregation gathered for worship in a white frame church built on an adjacent lot. The Parish House, completed in September 1924, eventually afforded the necessary space and facilities for the Bible school, Sunday adult worship, and other church groups. By 1930, however, the Bible school and Sunday adult worship were filled to capacity.

The cornerstone for the new church was laid on June 22, 1941. Constructed of Ohio sandstone, the building featured a stone tower surmounted by a stone spire, a series of thirty-seven stained-glass windows, and a pipe organ.

In its 105-year history nine pastors have led the Fairmount congregation to provide significant Presbyterian and community leadership, financial resources, and volunteer participation in spiritual service, social justice, and community. More on the history of the congregation through 2001 can be found on the Case Western Reserve website through this link:

<https://case.edu/ech/articles/f/fairmount-presbyterian-church>

Description of Parish Area

Even though our membership hails from communities throughout northeastern Ohio, we wanted to find out more about our immediate neighbors. Using demographics from *Mission Insite*, we found the following information:

Immediate Neighbors

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 our 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. 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. 85% of workers in our area work in white collar professions.

Through Mission Insite, we were able to leverage Mosaic, a geo-demographic segmentation system developed by and for marketers, to learn more about these demographic segments. Instead of looking at individual demographic variables, a segmentation system clusters households into groups with multiple common characteristics. Demographic variables that generally cluster together would include income, educational levels, presence of children and occupations among others. This top five mosaic segments in our immediate area include the following:

The largest groups in this 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%

Larger Neighborhood

A mere 3-mile radius from the church will find the full range of socio-economic diversity, including significant populations of poor, middle class, upper-middle class and the affluent. Similarly, that same 3-mile radius encompasses a broad range of racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, and political diversity.

Membership Information

Fairmount Presbyterian Church has approximately 450 people who participate in some way in the life of the community. Official membership statistics have not changed meaningfully in the last several years and a review and pruning of the membership roll will be critical in the near future. The pandemic and move to digital forms of worship are expected to change how membership is viewed and has provided an opportunity for Fairmount to re-engage with past members, attendees, and participants.

The members of the congregation represent primarily the white and middle to upper-middle classes of this geographic area, but who are committed to supporting and celebrating the diverse cultural and historical fabric of the Heights neighborhoods.

Worship and Attendance

From March 15, 2020 to present, Fairmount has been worshipping online only, with a recorded service posted on Sunday. We are still working on accurate attendance figures for this context, but the normal patterns of increased attendance on special Sundays still holds true, as well as low seasons. We expect to eventually move to a hybrid worship model and expect that the need to offer online ministry is likely permanent.

Before shutdown due to Covid-19, we had two worship services each Sunday, with an average combined attendance of 175 people. The first service (8:30 am) is held in the chapel, with communion each week. The second service (10:00 am) is held in the sanctuary and is designed to be intentionally intergenerational, with children 2nd grade and under migrating to worship enrichment following the Time For Young Disciples. Music is prominent within both services and professional section leaders rehearse and sing with the talented choir. We also have a vibrant bell choir and several members who play various instruments. Special services like Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Easter, World Communion, All Saints, Longest Night, Christmas Eve and Epiphany are cherished.

Within the last five years, the time for the later service was changed from 11 am to 10 am to mixed response. In lieu of Sunday school for adults and children, an effort was made to hold intergenerational events at least monthly. Though the programs were inviting and creative, the number of people involved was limited.

Mission Engagement

- **Greater Cleveland Congregations (ecumenical)**
GCC is a non-partisan coalition of faith communities and partner organizations in Cuyahoga County working to build power for social justice. GCC unites people across lines of race, class, religion, and geography to promote public, private and civic sector actions which strengthen and improve the quality of life of our neighborhoods. Fairmount is a founding member and partner congregation.
- **More Light Presbyterians (PCUSA)**
The mission of More Light Presbyterians is to work for the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex,

and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people in the life, ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and in society.

- **Little Free Pantry**

The youth and leadership of Fairmount Presbyterian Church have planned, designed and installed a Little Free Pantry from the community, for the community. We invite the community to take what they need and give what they can.

We also have a hunger fund which enables us to support different area organizations involved in helping feed people.

- **Meals on Wheels (community partner)**

- **Dougbe River School- Liberia (\$3000 annual)**

- **Bridges to Batey**

We have been engaged in ministry with the people of the Dominican Republic for thirty years. In 2014, we committed to a 25-year partnership with Batey 105, a local village in the heart of the sugarcane fields. We're focusing on relationship building and faith sharing, promoting justice, and improving social and economic mobility. Current ministry efforts support education within the Batey and helping children and adults receive education outside the Batey.

- **Refugee Ministry**

Through a partnership with Catholic Charities, Fairmount has committed to provide support to new refugee families immigrating to the United States, currently focusing on partnering with one family at a time.

- **Benevolence/Grant Funding Request**

FPC allocates a portion of the annual outreach budget to be distributed to organizations and mission partners with specific and immediate needs. These funds are distributed to efforts that best align with our congregation's values and mission priorities. We are trying to learn and implement different ways of getting the word to increase our impact.

- **Prison Ministry**

The Fund has been used to purchase books for accredited academic courses and book-discussion programs we have organized and led at correctional institutions in Northeast Ohio.

- **Earth Stewards**

Since 2008, the Fairmount Earth Stewards have had a mission of earth care and earth justice. Earth Stewards are committed to learning about God's creation and to being faithful members of God's natural world. We were recently re-certified by the PC(USA) as an Earth Care Congregation.

Approximately 5% of the church budget goes to external organizations, including many that are not listed above. The church participated in or supported intercultural or interfaith experiences 4 times in the past year. Members 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, and 69 members report volunteering over 5700 hours in the past year (and those are just the ones we know about!). Our members also engage in political advocacy, with 40 respondents contacting their elected officials in the past year. 57 members reported attending externally hosted educational or advocacy events on community issues as well.

Educational and Other Programs, Organizations and Activities

Within the past several years, Fairmount has moved to a Faith Formation model of Christian Education, equipping families with resources and experiences to integrate Christian faith into their lives in meaningful ways. Components have included Vacation Bible School (even held virtually in 2020), Confirmation program with mentors, youth fellowship activities and service projects, Worship Enrichment, Time for Young Disciples, children's choir and Parents' Night Out.

Adults meet for Bible study, book groups, lectures, breakfast fellowship, film series, Sisterhood of Service and small groups.

Currently, Session has 12 members in three classes. Three elders serve on each of the four Councils - Administration, Care (Deacons), Faith Formation and Serve. Sub-committees of Personnel, Worship and Memorial

Committee, as well as Investment Trustees, operate within this structure. Councils are open to all members of the church.

Fairmount Cooperative Preschool, originally founded by Fairmounters to provide high-quality, affordable early education to Fairmount children and our neighbors, meets in our building. The Preschool is no longer affiliated with the church, but the relationship remains friendly and supportive.

Brief Description of Property

A community landmark, Fairmount Presbyterian Church has extensive and well-maintained facilities on a majestic corner of a major suburban thoroughfare. Parking is more than adequate due to the church-owned lot across the street, as well as on-site parking and residential streets nearby. 86% of our survey respondents believed we have a building and parking that are both easy for newcomers to find.

Technology

Fairmount has a church website and active Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram accounts, currently maintained primarily by the Office Manager. During the pandemic, we have expanded digital offerings to include worship, devotions, educational and fellowship events. We have a part-time AV Production Coordinator who produces our worship services and a team of volunteers trained to use the recording camera and sound board in the sanctuary.

Financial Section

The 2020 church budget was \$1,171,548. The tithes and offerings for the most recent fiscal year were \$729,243. When divided among the approximate number of working age and older adults connected in some way to the life of the congregation (80% x 450=360 people), this indicates an average giving level of around \$2000 per person annually. We had \$849,358 in tithes and offerings only six years ago, but there were more people connected with the congregation at this time. The church has additional endowment, bequests and/or investment funds of \$9,676,484.

Vision and Values

God loves us. This belief is at the center of all we do at Fairmount. The God we worship and serve is one who loves us as we are -- no questions asked.

We are called to share that love with others. Sometimes this means giving our time and resources to those in need. Often it requires extending forgiveness to those who have wronged us, but our call to share God's love is always done in response to God's love for us.

All are welcome to receive and respond to God's love. As beloved children of God, we welcome all persons to join our family of faith as full participants, regardless of age, race or ethnicity, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, economic status, differences of thought and expression, or any other human condition. We celebrate and find strength in our diversity.

Community matters. We believe that God's love is best experienced in the context of a community. When we commit to worshipping, serving, and learning with others, we learn more about God and ourselves; we also gain access to a deeper wisdom that helps us to navigate the wonderful and challenging complexities of life.

One can hear these values emanate through the stories told about our church and our members when we are operating at our best; we understand that we could more actively turn to them to guide us in decision making in times of challenge.

Ministry Plans/Priorities derived from the ReVision Process (summary)

1. Embracing Diversity and Intentional Anti-Racism
Formation of a standing group within the church comprised of individuals from the cohort that has done the individual/personal work and BIPOC members.
 - What work *might* they do?Critical examination and active dismantling of systems, structures, policies, procedures, and ideologies that have perpetuated racism within FPC .
Investigate the intersectionality of this work with other aspects of church life.
Constant evaluation.
Profound sensitivity to identify areas for growth within the church.
Ongoing decision-making, adapting, changing, and growing.

2. Re-Engaging the Church
Implement four strategies:
 - “Guess Who’s Calling?” (Arranged one-to-one conversations)

- Shepherds- each congregational “Shepherds” engage with 20 members in periodic conversation that say, “We care about you.”
 - Educational topics- virtual and eventual in-person discussion / prayer groups
 - Stephen Ministers
3. Becoming a Matthew 25 Congregation
 4. Addressing Food Insecurity
 5. Proposal for a new or revised staff position for Managing Communications- single point-of-contact responsible for shepherding the creation and management of a cohesive, consistent strategy for educating the FPC congregation about mission work and opportunities for becoming involved, as well as outreach to the community.

Appendices:

Revision Ministry Proposals can be found at <https://fpccl.org/home/mission-working-groups>.

The Convergence Final Assessment Report can be found at at <https://fpccl.org/home/mission-working-groups>.