

Parma-South Presbyterian Church Mission Study Report

Purpose Statement: The purpose of the mission study is to clarify who we are as a church, what we stand for, our values and objectives, to guide us in setting goals for future ministry and discern what God has in store for Parma-South Presbyterian Church.

Overview of Mission Study Method: The Parma-South Presbyterian Church Mission Study team was formed and approved by Session in June 2022 and is comprised of the following members: Bob Schomer, Norma Fink, Sandy Kardamis, Melissa Evans, and Sarah Rodriguez. Pastor Blake Severson has been our Staff support with guidance by Presbyterian Liaisons Rev. Dr. Arvid Whitmore and Cyndi Oviatt.

The team contracted the Convergence Consulting group who conducted both a church participant and church leader survey during the month of October- mid November 2022. The anonymous survey was comprised of 46 multiple choice and short answer questions. A total of 90 responses were received and analyzed, which surpassed the goal of 70% congregational response (attachment A).

In addition to the survey, we held 3 Town Hall gatherings during the months of October, December, and February to meet with the congregation for in-person discussion. The overall focus of the Town Halls examined where we currently are and what direction we want to head next.

Brief History of the Church: Parma-South Presbyterian Church was founded in 1835 as the first Presbyterian Society of Cleveland located in Parma Township. In 1874, the church became Parma Presbyterian Church, and in 1937 it became Parma-South Presbyterian Church by combining the congregations of Parma Presbyterian with South Presbyterian Church in Cleveland (attachment D). We are a small, caring and loving congregation, who like most churches has declined in membership in recent years. While the pandemic was a challenge, we adapted with virtual meetings and launched live-streaming Sunday services. In Fall 2022, we returned to in-person services and activities while continuing to develop our hybrid streaming services.

Description of our Church's Community Setting: Parma-South Presbyterian Church is located in Parma Heights, Ohio, a populous suburb of Cleveland. In accordance with the attached Vital Church Assessment provided by the Convergence Group, the current population in a 5 mile radius is approximately 190,680, while the City of Parma Heights has around 20,000. A more detailed neighborhood report can be reviewed on pages 12-15 of the attached Convergence Assessment.

Membership Information and Worship Attendance: PSPC is a medium sized congregation with approximately 200 people who participate or support the church in some way. We are an older congregation that is predominantly Caucasian. We have an average of 69 people (in person and online) for weekly worship attendance. Pages 1-4 of the attached Convergence Assessment detail current demographics of our current congregation.

Current Staffing Model: Current staff at Parma-South: Transitional Pastor, Parish Associate, 3 part-time office support staff, 2 part-time janitors, 1 nursery care staff, 1 audio/visual coordinator.

Mission Engagement: Our congregation has a rich history of mission both locally and globally. Pages 17-19 of the Convergence Assessment detail the various civic and mission partnerships that our members are actively involved in or support. One of our learnings from the Convergence Assessment is that by

having our members be so scattered in areas that we support and volunteer, it spreads our members and dilutes impact. It should be noted that in 2021 our members reported a total of over 6400 hours spent volunteering, but only 3100 of those hours were in church settings. We see a great opportunity to focus our priorities and our hours so we can be more impactful to our local community.

Spiritual Life, Organizations and Activities: We currently have one children's Sunday School class. In addition, we have two adult Life Groups that meet weekly. A few small groups that meet regularly are Men's Square and Women's Coffee with the Word, both which share a meal and group Bible study. Our current Parish Associate leads a weekly Grief Group that serves both church and community members.

As noted in the Convergence Assessment, Parma-South faces a challenge that many mainline churches face today. We can be weak in areas of personal and spiritual growth. We feel that we would be well served for opportunities to expand our spiritual development experiences. We recognize that we must do so in a way that honors busy lives and competing realities. Further spiritual practices can strengthen us for enduring change. The Session might want to invite members of our existing small groups to be a part of the discussions of how we can grow our adult education opportunities.

We have several non-church organizations that bring community members into the building which include Parma Heights Historical Society, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts of America, Al-Anon and 4-H. In addition, we host the annual community Memorial Day Service on our front lawn in conjunction with the City of Parma Heights.

In recent years, some of our activities include:

- Summer Strawberry Festival
- Souper Bowl Sunday collections for Food Pantry
- Trunk or Treat Fall Festival
- Kids Winter Indoor Snowball Fight and Movie Party
- Advent Holiday Meal
- Weekly Coffee Hour
- Palm Sunday Kids Egg Hunt and Celebration

During our Town Hall Meetings, it was identified that we would like to see more Youth and Family activities.

Property Description: The current church structure was built in the 1950s, with two additions in the 1960s to meet the growing needs of the community at that time. Our current challenge is that the building is larger than what the current membership can sustain or adequately utilize, and the facility requires significant resources to maintain it. While Parma-South has significant assets, the question we need to be asking is: are we using those assets and property for impact or for institutional preservation? Many of the church members voiced agreement at our Town Hall meetings that the building is too big for our current congregational size and needs.

Technology: The pandemic thrust us into broadening our technology usage. We currently use Boxcast software to live-stream our Sunday and other special services. Our AV Team continues to upgrade and expand our streaming capabilities. We utilize Zoom for virtual meetings. Our website was completely recreated in the past year and we are looking at ways to update and better maintain our social media accounts.

Finances: The overall financial picture of our church can be reviewed on page 19 of the Convergence Assessment. It reveals that we are financially sustainable to support a full time Pastor with support of the interest from our endowment and other investments. We celebrate our financial picture as a strength, a strength that can support decisions to invest in the advancement of our ministries in order to become the church we want to be. At the same time, we understand the need to navigate the financial drain of maintaining our large building. Our mindset is two-fold: first is to continue to be open to external organizations with like-values that can lease the under-utilized space in our facility. Second is we want to grow our membership. A priority for Parma-South is to become better acquainted with our neighbors in our surrounding community and understand their needs.

Vision and Values:

To become like Jesus- This is a vision of maturity and formation in Christ that leads to action for Christ.

To form a meaningful community- A community of love, faith, and truth. This is a vision for deep relationships that give mutual support and develop us as followers of Jesus, while we carry out our mission together.

To bless and be blessed- Loved, blessed, called, sent.

We believe God is already at work within and around us.

Ministry Plans/Priorities: The Session has considered the recommendations from the Convergence Assessment (appendix A page 22) in conjunction with the responses from the three Town Hall gatherings that were put on by the Mission Study Team. At these gatherings we strategically placed the congregational participants in small groups with one table leader who was either a Session leader or Mission Study leader to guide the conversation and take notes. At the first meeting held in November, Pastor Blake posed a total of ten questions that fostered reflection on our history, identity, and values. Several themes emerged during this first gathering which included:

- We identify ourselves as a welcoming, aging, and traditional group of people who care for one another
- We value tradition, diversity, and fellowship activities/programs
- We most appreciate long-time friendships, willingness to serve, children/youth activities and our music programs.

The second Town Hall, held in December, was in the same format as the first. Pastor Blake provided a summary of responses from the first town hall meeting, on a large screen TV and utilized word cloud images to put the frequency of responses into text size perspective (attachment B). The attendees really enjoyed hearing and seeing the results of the first gathering. This time Pastor Blake posed a series of questions focusing on future ideas, challenges, and willingness to change (attachment C). Common themes we heard included:

- We are currently excited for the future that God has planned of us, willingness to try new things, growth of youth and families, having our interim pastor and looking forward to a permanent one.
- We wonder if it's possible to continue serving our community, grow and attract new families, have the workforce to do all the activities we want, and sustain our current building.

- We are most concerned about our aging congregation, loss of families, maintaining our current building with decreasing membership and our purpose in the community.
- One large theme that emerged included willingness to sacrifice our traditional ways of the past to look forward to a new future.

The third meeting focused on identifying specific mission outreach ideas that would assist our congregation to better connect with our neighbors. The atmosphere at the Town Hall gatherings were very positive, enthusiastic, and interactive. The Mission Study leaders recommend that the Town Hall activity be a part of regular ongoing communications with our members, possibly on a quarterly basis.

Based on what we have come to know about ourselves from the Convergence Assessment and the Town Hall Gatherings, we have chosen to focus on three mission priorities and three overarching core values with the main emphasis on how to better connect with our neighbors.

Mission Priorities:

1. Sponsor a local youth athletic team
 - a. We have sponsored two Parma-Heights city recreational department youth athletic teams. We plan to not only financially sponsor these teams, but to actively show up at the games to cheer on the teams. We want them to know that our church family supports their needs both on and off the field.
2. Actively support the Parma Heights Food Bank
 - a. In the past we have made monetary and food donations. While this is helpful, we want to also take a more active, in person and hands on roll with our local food missions. Our Mission Committee is going to organize ways that our congregation can have a greater community presence and better serve our neighbors.
3. Refocus on our church mission garden and food ministry
 - a. On our church grounds, a 16 raised-bed mission garden was constructed over 10 years ago. Our garden has been struggling to function the past few years due to declining abilities of its team. We plan to have a focus group evaluate the current needs to revitalize this fantastic food ministry. Some ideas include reaching out to a local high school's culinary program, our local Boy Scout troop and our 4-H chapter to create additional community partnerships. In the past, all of the produce grown in the garden is donated to our local food bank. We recognize that our mission garden requires a lot of people resources, and we are wrestling with how to make it a productive ministry once again.

Core Values critical to the success of the above ministries are:

1. Youth and Family Activities- We have active Discipleship and Fellowship committees that have ongoing plans for Youth and Family activities. A number of these activities include an annual Memorial Day Service, Strawberry Festival, outdoor hikes, lunch on our front lawn, Trunk or Treat and other off site outings all which makes us more visible to those outside of our building. These activities are intentional to become more welcoming to our neighbors. Our focus is straight forward: give these committees the resources they need to have successful activities and engage with our community.

2. To become more welcoming- As emphasized by the Convergence Assessment, one of the first ways to make our church more welcoming is to get outside of our physical building and meet people in our community; make what is happening in our neighborhood a priority. A prime example is the city's annual Memorial Day Service that is conducted on our front lawn. Our congregation needs to be a visible and welcoming presence at that service. Another example is our Properties Committee who is improving directional signage for our building and searching for ways to make our facility more ADA accessible.

3. Effective communication- It is essential to the success of our ministries. Emphasizing improved communications via our social media and website as well as weekly communications (email blast) and monthly newsletter (Tidings) has been identified as a core value to be expanded upon. We recognize the need to better communicate externally with our neighborhood, so they know who we are and why we are here.

Recommendation:

Based on responses given, our Session recognizes a challenge that we face is our ability to accept change, particularly given the various goals that we have established for our church. Convergence offers a workshop titled "Healthy Communications" that addresses how we communicate and deal with each other during times of change. The workshop has been scheduled for June 6, 13 and 27th, 2023.

Summary:

Upon the writing of this Mission Study, we have several lingering concerns. As noted in the Convergence Assessment we have significant assets. We need to continue to assess if we are using our endowment and property for impact or for institutional preservation. Secondly, our congregation has expressed desires to develop our Christian education programs for our youth as well as connecting with our neighbors. There may be staffing decisions required to support the vision of the church we want to be.

For potential candidates for our permanent pastor position, their question may be "Why should I choose Parma-South?". In the past six months, we have learned many important details of who we are. We have a deep love for Jesus and a strong bond/fellowship for each other. We have an over 180-year history and have faced many challenges in the past. We understand that what got us here today will not be what gets us to where we want to go in the future.

We are still working towards completing the sentence that best describes our church: Parma-South is the church that ____ for our neighbors. We have identified several initiatives to better get to know our neighbors and meet their needs. As with any organization, some may be successful, some may not. We have an experienced, faithful core group of leaders. We are committed to be prayerful, agile, and open to changes required to become the church that God wants us to be.

Appendix List:

Attachment A- Convergence Vital Church Assessment

Attachment B- Town Hall #1 Summary with Word

Cloud Attachment C- Town Hall #2 Summary with

Word Cloud Attachment D- Who We Are Document



Vital Church Assessment

Parma-South Presbyterian Church
Parma Heights, OH

12/7/22

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OUR PARTNERSHIP

Convergence partnered with Parma-South Presbyterian Church in 2022 for Assessment and Consultation 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.

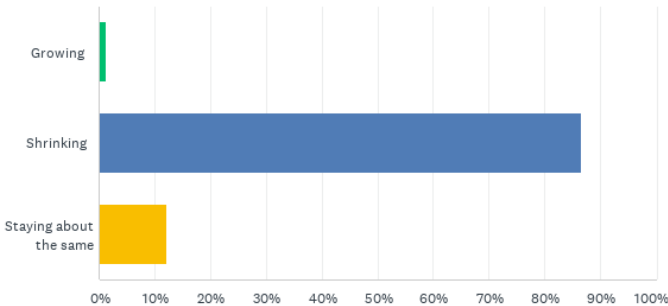
CHURCH DATA

MEMBERSHIP AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Parma had 90 survey responses with enough responses to analyze. Parma-South Presbyterian Church has approximately 203 people who participate or support the church in some way. The church has 1 worship service a week, which has had an average of 69 people in attendance (face to face and online) in recent months. The weekly attendance averages 46 in person and is around 23 online. Online attendance is measured through Boxcast. This is declining over time, even before the pandemic, from 116 participating in face-to-face worship in 2016 to 95 in 2019 to 46-52 the last couple of years.

When asked, “Do you think your congregation is growing, shrinking, or staying about the same:”

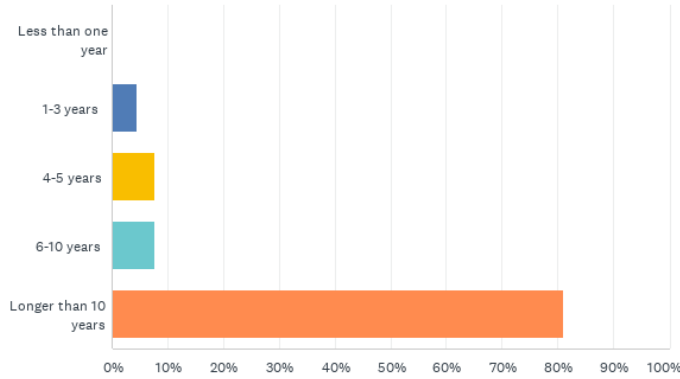
Q31 Do you think your congregation is:



The majority of respondents (86%) perceived it as shrinking, with only 1% perceiving it as growing.

The rate of new participants is declining over time, from an average of 8 per year 2016-2019 to only 3 in 2021. 4% of survey respondents, or 4 people, have been participating 3 years or less, with 81% participating longer than 10 years. No survey respondents report beginning participation within the last year. This could be due to the pandemic effects, but based on your decline in worship attendance is likely part of a larger pattern of failing to engage new people.

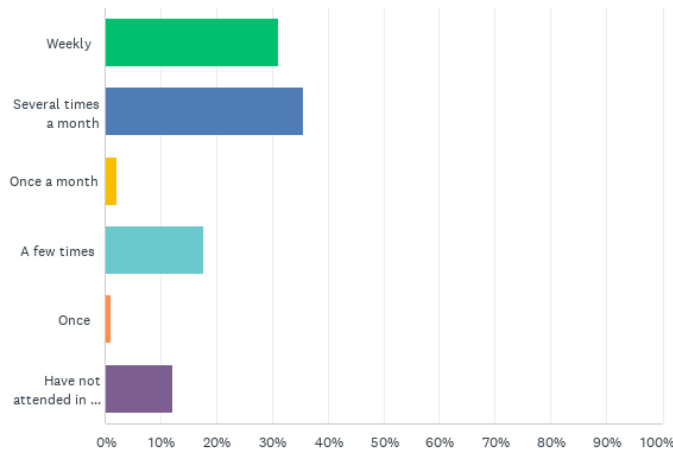
Q1 How long have you attended worship or other events (online or face to face) with this congregation?



Your leader survey reports 10 visitors in worship each month over the last few years. **It is worth asking, what happens to these visitors? It doesn't seem like many are joining your congregation.**

Most survey respondents (69%) report participating in church events at least monthly over the last six months. However, 13% have attended only once or not at all over that period. So there is a segment of people who care enough about the church to take the survey but are not currently able or willing to attend worship.

Q2 How often have you attended worship or another church event (face to face or online) in the last six months?



The church also holds about 15 non-worship activities per month, with around 50 people participating in some non-worship activity each month. Activities include:

- Chancel choir

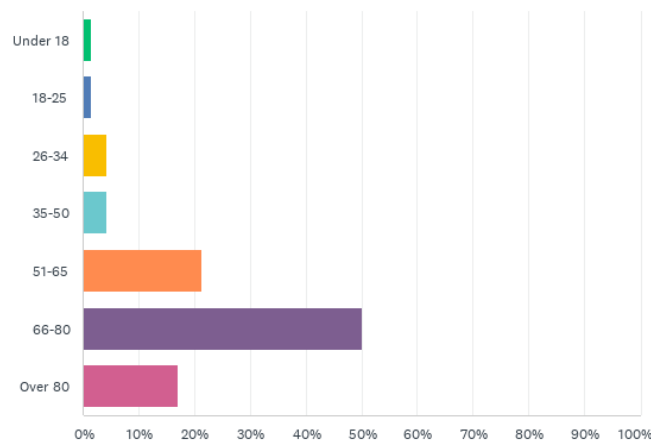
- Life Groups
- Session
- Quilting Group
- Bell Choir
- Women's Circle
- Committee Mtgs (8)
- Coffee w/ the Word

In the past 5 years, 71% participated both online and face to face church events, while 1% only participated in online events and 24% only participated in face to face events over that same period. **This means a significant portion of your congregation was likely very disconnected during the height of the pandemic and based on your decline, have not re-engaged.**

CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Among congregational survey respondents, 11% were under 50, 21% were 51-65, and 67% were over 65. 13% of respondent households contain children, and 88% of respondent households contain senior citizens. The leader survey reflects a similar age demographic spread after accounting for children, with 9% under 18, 13% 18-50, 16% 51-65, and 62% over 65.

Q38 How old are you?

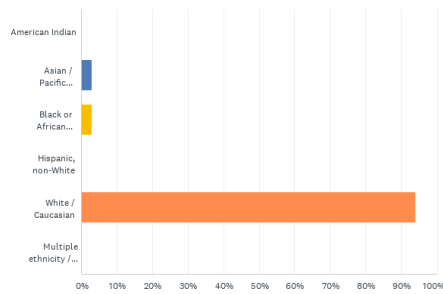


The ages of those on the governing body of the church skews even younger with 45% being over 65 and 55% being working age adults. One small suggestion - a greater representation by youth and young adults would increase the fit between the ages of those on the governing body and the congregation, as there is currently no member on the governing body under 25 years old, while 13% of the congregation falls into this age group.

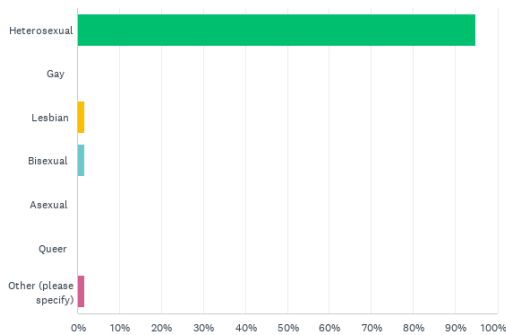
The 68 congregation members responding to the demographic question on race report identifying as 94% White/Caucasian, 3% Black or African-American, and 3% Asian/Pacific Islander. The pastor

survey indicated similar racial diversity. On the survey, 3% of 59 respondents identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or asexual, with 95% identifying as heterosexual. Respondents identified as 27% male and 73% female, with none identifying as transgender, intersex, or gender nonconforming.

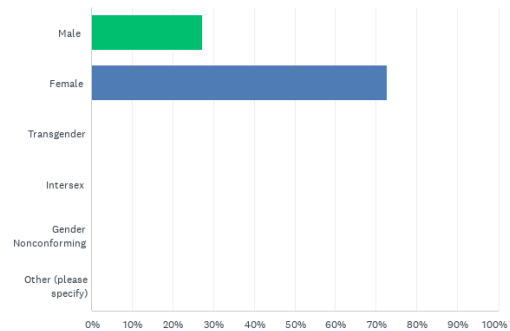
Q39 Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)



Q43 Would you identify yourself as:

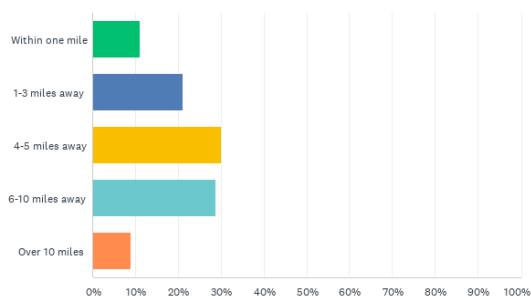


Q44 Would you identify yourself as:

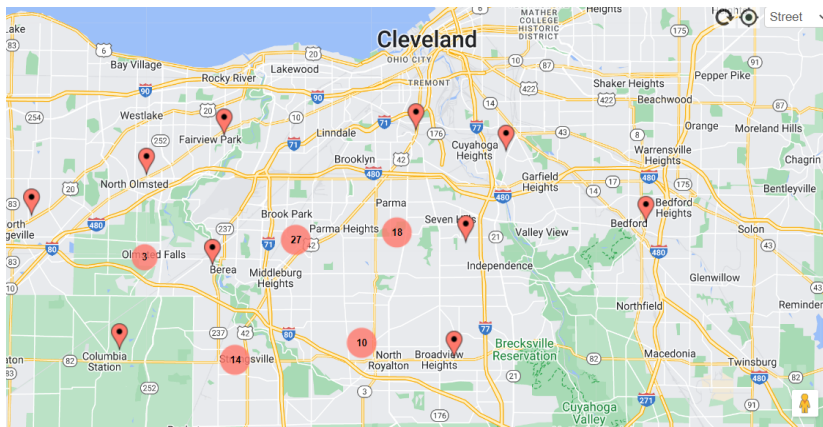


91% of respondents have attended at least some college. Almost 34% have attended or completed graduate school. Your congregation is highly educated and solidly middle income. Most respondents (89%) report household incomes between \$25,000 and \$149,999 per year, with the largest segments reporting from \$50,000-\$99,999 per year.

Q4 Where do you live in relation to this congregation?



The majority of survey respondents, or 68% live over 4 miles away from the church, with 9% living over 10 miles away. Your congregation is moderately geographically dispersed. The zip code plot of your survey respondents stretches as far away as Hinckley and Mayfield.



The most common zip codes were:

- 44130 – 30%
- 44133 – 12%
- 44134 – 12%

CONGREGATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

Survey respondents were mixed in their perceptions of the congregation and its situation. Over 90% of respondents felt the church:

- Has a building and parking that are easy for newcomers to find
- Holds strong beliefs and values
- Supports vibrant ministries through the financial and time investments of its members
- Has worship that makes me think
- Empowers members to do ministry in ways that reflect their gifts, callings and passions

Over 80% thought the church:

- Has a clear mission and purpose
- Is working for social justice
- Supports members in developing spiritual practices
- Is a source of learning for adults
- Builds relationships among members
- Is like a close-knit family

This last one 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.

However, a significant minority disagree on whether the church:

- Is spiritually vital and alive
- Engages all the senses in worship
- Has worship that calls me to action
- Has worship that inspires awe
- Successfully engages people of all ages
- Is a source of learning for youth and children

So these may be areas with some room for improvement.

Only 44% of respondents are excited about where the church is headed. This is down slightly from 54% who report that they felt that way in 2019. Your recent decline is felt in your congregation, and they are losing optimism about its future.

When asked, “How did you come to be involved with this church?,” your members responded with these words:



When asked, “What keeps you involved with this church?,” your members responded with these words:



In both of these areas, themes included the people and family that invited them and got them involved, and the relationships with those people and family members that keep them involved. Also mentioned as a reason for joining was your Presbyterian identity. While people are less likely to search for a church by denomination in 2022 than in decades past, being invited by family or friends is still the most frequent way people find a new church.

Themes found in your survey responses about what could hold you back were –

Shrinking numbers and aging of participants. Comments in this area included:

- Lack of new families and members
- Lack of members , age of members
- Membership not willing to try something new
- People leaving, going to another church
- More and more people leaving.
- Non-participation
- We need more young people. Families with children
- Children leaving because of marriage. Enthusiasm for something new
- Lack of participation
- Not getting more people involved.
- Not attracting newcomers
- We need to attract new members and retain them.
- Lack of willingness to participate or lead
- People's continued reluctance to go to any church.
- Lack of active participation
- The national trend of non-church goers. Difficulty in attracting youth into church activities. The aging of membership which makes active participation diminish.
- the majority of the members are getting older
- Lack of growth and death.
- Our aging congregation.
- Apathy
- indifference
- Aging congregation
- Right now we have a predominately older group of members with few young people which might make it hard to really be active.
- Lack of enough people to do the tasks that need to be done. Lack of younger members, especially children and youth.
- We don't have many young people who have the energy to do it.
- unable to bring in new members/families, children of all ages
- Diminishing attendance and aging members is our downfall. We cannot grow and move forward without new active members
- Lack of interest or willingness of congregation members to participate in the operation, life, and mission of the Church.
- Lack of participation, or people who are able/capable of helping.
- Lack of manpower. The common 20% of the people do 80% of the work... and at this church those 20% are OLD.
- The ability to attract young families to join our church
- Lack of participation by the congregation.

Struggles with change. Comments in this area included:

- Resistance to change. Failure to embrace and follow through on "new ideas" and to adapt to "changing times".
- The fear of change. Change is needed.
- The fear of change, as I have said our age demographic is older, which over the years I have seen the fear of

change within the church. Although, everyone would be welcoming to a younger crowd, but the act of changing some things in order for that to happen is the problem.

- The congregation no longer has the energy or desire for change.
- Resistance to change
- The want to continue as we are now.
- Fear of change
- Lack of a cohesive vision, or resistance to change.
- When I was more involved in the church as a deacon, I saw how difficult change is in the church for even small things. I'm not sure that has changed much.
- Certain members holding too fast to the past and not helping with the change.
- The congregation wanting to stay status quo. They are very reluctant to change.

- unwillingness to accept change.
- People unwilling to accept change
- unwillingness to change type of worship
- Resisting change and not being open to new and different ways of doing church
- Holding on to "the way it used to be", resisting change
- People that don't want to see changes and want to keep things "the way they've always been"
- Those that don't want change, typically the older generation
- inability to make changes - need to attract younger people and encourage them to get involved. hope to see a more vibrant and diverse congregation reaching out to community

Your pastoral transition. Comments in this area included:

- lack of leadership
- time taking in choosing a pastor
- Not finding a permanent minister
- Poor leadership
- Not having a regular pastor.
- instability in leadership

Many of these challenges are not uncommon to congregations such as yours. However, your struggle with change, in particular, will be a significant factor in your future ministry. A congregation that can't change must turn its attention toward legacy, because resistance to change prevents incorporating new members and living into new callings for the congregation.

CONGREGATIONAL WELCOME

In terms of congregational welcome, 99% of respondents at least somewhat agree the church wants more members, and 99% say the church wants to be racially and culturally diverse. 98% feel the church is welcoming to people of all races, and 92% feel the church is welcoming to people of all sexualities, and genders. 94% feel the church is welcoming and accessible to those with disabilities. 74% of survey respondents report it is easy for new people to join existing church groups.

However, only 51% of respondents believe the church loves the enthusiasm of people with new ideas. Only 60% of church members say that before the pandemic they made it a point to speak to any new people present in worship. This is an area that will need addressing if you are to make newcomers feel truly welcome.

Living up to your desire for growth would require larger numbers of church members trained and ready to roll out the welcome by greeting new people, welcoming them into existing groups, and embracing the new ideas they bring, will make a huge difference in the perception of welcome by those who visit.

OPENNESS TO CHANGE

In areas relating to openness to change, survey respondents indicated:

- 80% felt the church invites all members into visioning and decision-making

However, only:

- 55% felt the church helps them make their ideas for ministry a reality
- 47% felt the members of the church are willing to change in order to achieve shared goals
- 47% felt new ideas are always welcome at the church
- 42% felt the church is always ready to try something new
- 39% felt the church embraces change
- 39% felt they frequently talk about change during worship and other activities.
- 36% felt the church prides itself on an embrace of change and constant adaptation.
- 32.5% felt members are always willing to try something new at church
- 31% felt the church regularly does new things in worship

Additionally,

- 89% felt the church is more comfortable when things remain the same.
- 87% felt putting a new idea into action takes a long time at your church.

This data indicates that your congregation is very low in openness to change and change skills.

You will need serious attention to this area if you seek to revitalize your congregation. There is no way to truly listen to what God is calling your church to do and be without being open to doing things in new ways. You will need to build your muscle for the days ahead. We can help with that, so talk to your consultant about ways you might begin to take on that challenge.

CONFLICT SKILLS

Almost 52% of survey respondents reported church conflict during the past two years, 70% of those people said the conflict was major and some people withheld donations or left the congregation. Comments suggest that pastoral transitions were a source of some of that conflict.

85% felt the church embraces differences of opinion and belief and 69% believe the church deals with disagreements and conflicts openly rather than hushed up or hidden behind closed doors.

According to survey respondents, the most likely reactions to conflict are to defer to the head pastor, denominational staff or elected congregational leader to resolve, to negotiate to receive a solution, or to avoid the issue. 82% of survey respondents reported no training in conflict over the past 5 years, and 18%, or 12 people, reported some training in conflict skills

With serious conflict in your past, you will need healthy conflict skills to go forward together as a congregation. Perhaps those who have been trained as healthy conflict could encourage other participants to take a conflict course, or you could hold one just for your congregation. This could be a very beneficial part of the process as you all discern your next steps.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Renewing a church requires a deep engagement with spiritual practices. Parma-South Presbyterian Church regularly promotes

- individual prayer, meditation, or devotions.

The church occasionally promotes religious practices such as:

- individual Bible study
- group Bible study
- exploring timely topics in light of faith.
- talking with your family about faith

The church does not promote:

- family devotions
- group prayer practices.
- fasting.

Members who responded to the survey indicate a moderate level of participation in individual prayer, meditation, or devotions, with almost 96% doing so at least occasionally and 69% doing so weekly or almost weekly or even more often.

Over 60% at least occasionally practice:

- group prayer
- individual Bible study
- talking with their family about faith
- exploring timely topics in light of faith.

Less commonly practiced are:

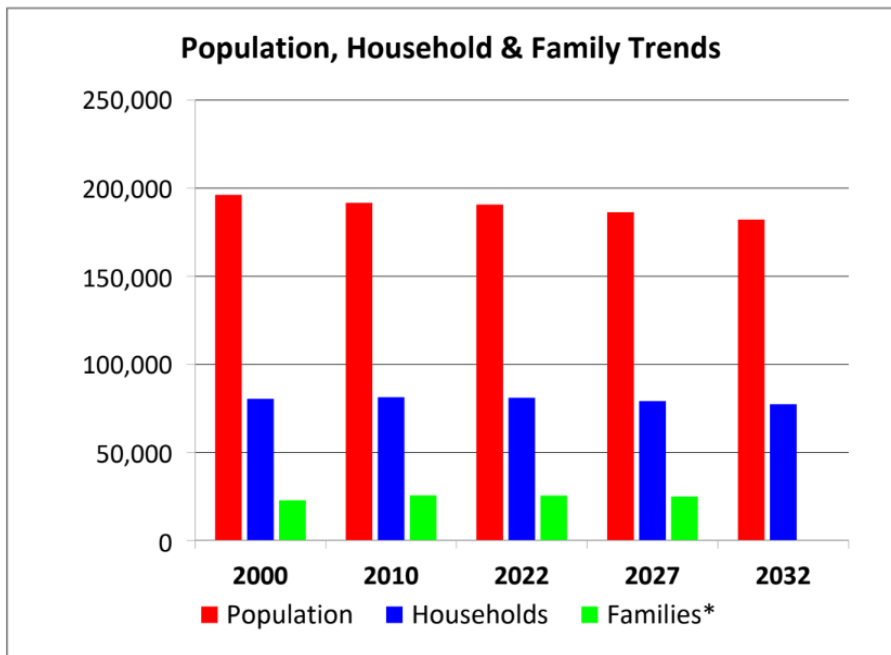
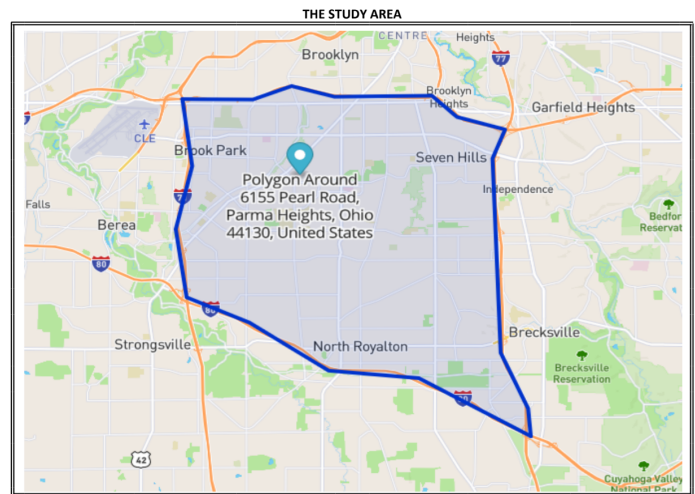
- group Bible study
- family devotions
- fasting

Parma-South Presbyterian Church may exhibit a typical challenge in the mainline church today. We can be weak in areas of personal and spiritual growth. Any church facing significant work ahead, as all are due to the pandemic, would be well-served to look for opportunities to expand your spiritual development experiences but do so in a way that honors busy lives, commuting realities and short attention spans. A deep well of spirituality can carry members through many challenges and help them engage in healthy ways when things seem hard.

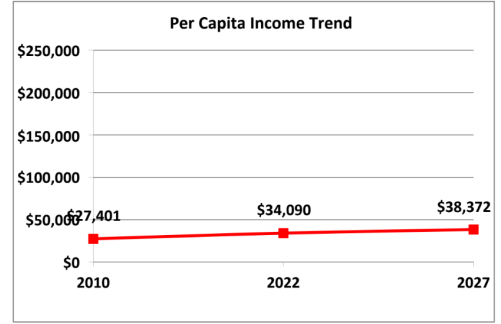
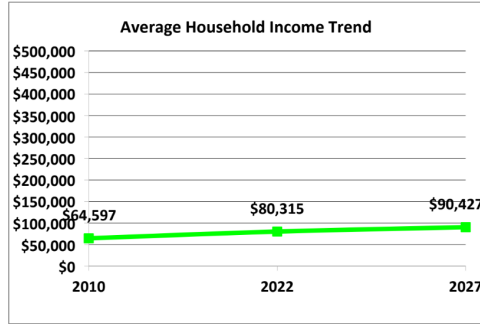
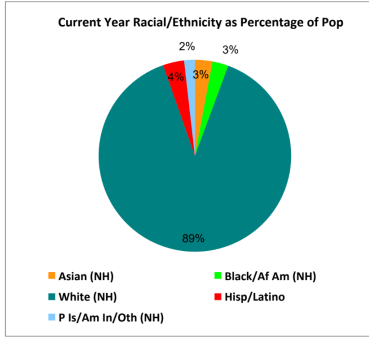
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

2022 population ~190,680
 2027 projection 186,276

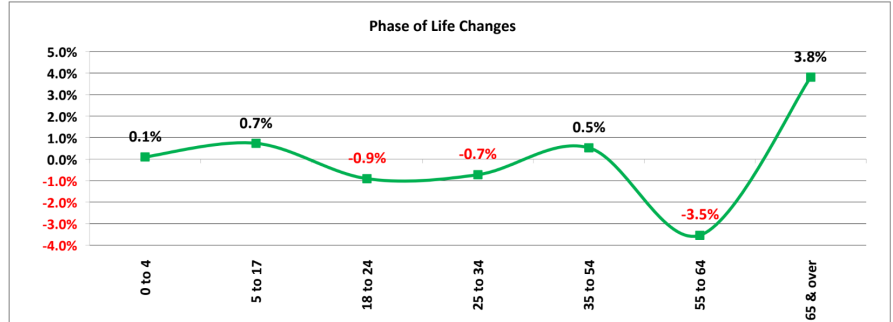
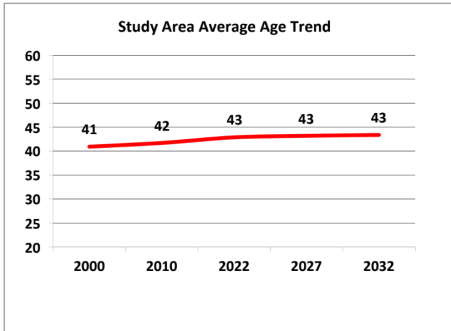
You are in a populous suburb of Cleveland. The population in the area around your church building is declining over time.



Your neighbors are predominantly white, older, middle-income, well-educated, white-collar workers and retirees.



The average age has risen over time but is now stable. The fastest growing age group is 65 and over.



Your congregation echoes the demographics of your community, although your participants' average age is even older than the community at large.

In addition to large demographic segments which are all older, such as Autumn Years, Thriving Boomers, Blue Sky Boomers, and Booming with Confidence, there is a significant segment of families in your area, categorized as Family Union, Suburban Style, and Flourishing Families. Other smaller segments are young people categorized as Singles and Starters.

	2022	2022%
Mosaic Segments		
J34 Autumn Years - Suburban Sophisticates	12,986	16.3%
I31 Family Union - Hard Working Values	11,670	14.6%
E20 Thriving Boomers - No Place Like Home	6,888	8.6%
L42 Blue Sky Boomers - Rooted Flower Power	4,983	6.3%
D16 Suburban Style - Settled in Suburbia	4,921	6.2%
O51 Singles and Starters - Digitally Savvy	3,846	4.8%
K40 Significant Singles - Bohemian Groove	3,727	4.7%
C11 Booming with Confidence - Sophisticated City Dwellers	3,422	4.3%
O54 Singles and Starters - Influenced by Influencers	2,741	3.4%
B09 Flourishing Families - Family Fun-tastic	2,054	2.6%
A04 Power Elite - Picture Perfect Families	1,907	2.4%

Your neighbors most strongly believe that:

- God is love and invites the world into a loving relationship.
- People in the church do not behave as Jesus would behave.
- Belief in Jesus does not require participation in a church.
- Jesus was both divine and human.
- Strong families are key to social stability.
- America has a moral responsibility to be a force for good in the world.
- Tolerance is necessary for social peace and wellbeing.
- The US is losing its place of world leadership.

They also have great hope for the future of their community.

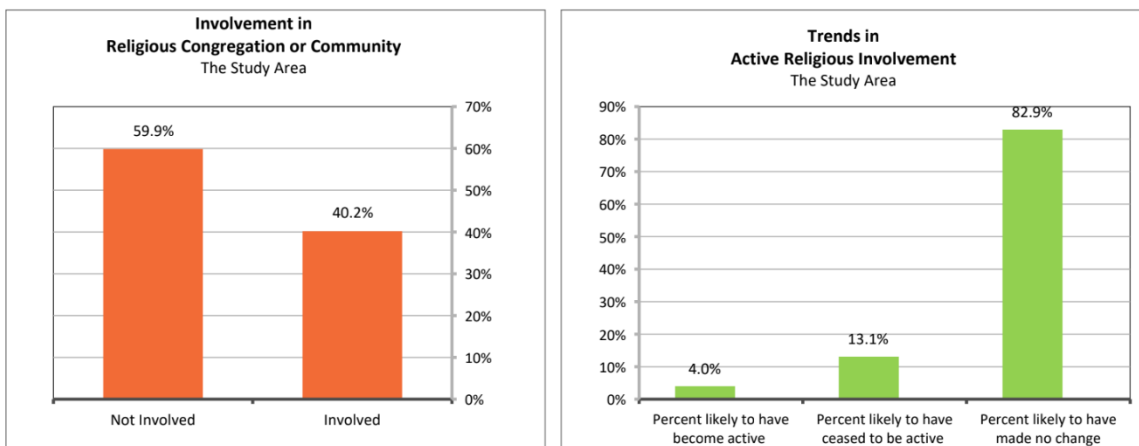
Your neighbors' biggest life concerns include:

- Ongoing impact of COVID-19
- Social & political tensions/discord
- Racism/racial injustice

Other life concerns are detailed in the chart below.

Top 15 of 44 Life Concerns			
Ranked by greatest concerns			
Ranking	Concern	Ratio	Strength of Concern
1	Ongoing impact of COVID-19	19.7	Extremely Strong Concern
2	Social & political tensions/discord	7.6	Very Strong Concern
3	Racism/racial injustice	4.0	Very Strong Concern
4	Health crisis/illness	3.9	Strong Concern
5	Financing the future/savings/retirement	3.5	Strong Concern
6	Fear of the future or the unknown	3.3	Strong Concern
7	Losing weight/diet issues	2.8	Strong Concern
8	Personal health problems	2.6	Strong Concern
9	Illegal immigration	2.5	Strong Concern
10	Quality of children's education	2.3	Strong Concern
11	Stress/time to relax	2.1	Strong Concern
12	Time for friends/family	2.1	Strong Concern
13	Day-to-day financial matters	2.0	Strong Concern
14	Making the right choices/finding direction	2.0	Strong Concern
15	Caring for aging parents	1.9	Somewhat Strong Concern

Your neighbors are not very likely to have a religious preference or participate in a congregation.



The segment that is not involved with a religious congregation has grown from 59.6% in 2017 to 59.9% in 2021.

For those who do not participate in a religious congregation, the top reasons were:

- Religious People too Judgmental
- Religion too focused on money
- Don't trust organized religion
- Don't trust religious leaders
- Disillusionment with religion

Among those who might consider participating in a religious congregation, they are looking for:

- Warm and friendly encounters
- Quality sermons

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 meet the needs of those in your neighborhood, will help your congregation be known to those who may be seeking a Christian congregation. Keep in mind - all needs are not material, and those who may seem to have more than enough fiscal and physical wealth may still have deep spiritual and relational needs. 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.

To read more about the people that make up your community, see the reports in this folder:

[Mission Insite Demographic Reports.](#)

NEARBY CONGREGATIONS

People in Parma Heights have over a dozen churches to choose from. There are a few other churches of your denomination in your larger community, but they are over 10 miles away. The

most notable is John Knox Presbyterian in North Olmsted, which is larger and seems to have more momentum at this time. However, it is a 20+ minute drive for those in your community.

Churches in your area with similar values to yours but different denominations are common. Your leader survey reports that these include:

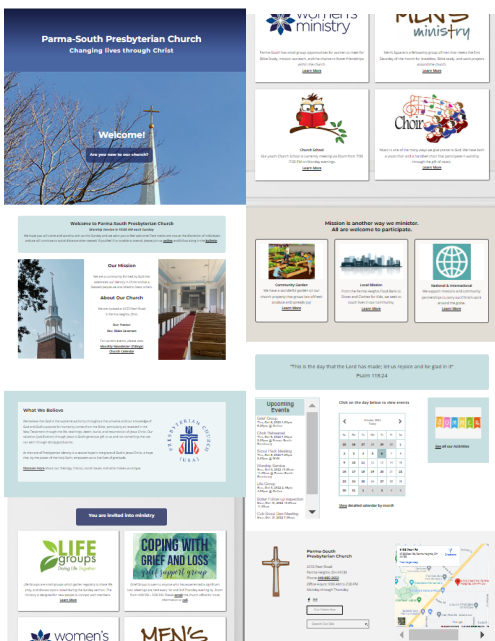
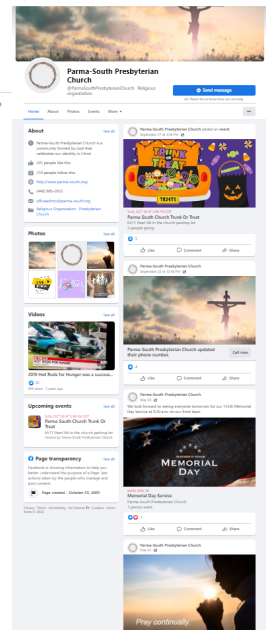
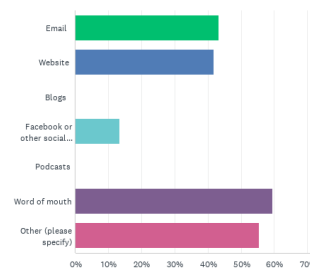
- Divinity Lutheran
- Ridgewood United Methodist
- Strongsville United Methodist
- Middleburg Hts United Church of Christ
- Grace Church
- Pleasant Hills United Methodist
- Bethany Lutheran
- Royal Redeemer Lutheran
- Vineyard Church

To grow, Parma-South 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. The good news is that having so many neighboring churches with similar values offers lots of potential for collaboration. **What partnerships might you explore with these churches in the future?**

COMMUNICATIONS

Parma-South Presbyterian Church communicates regularly using email, a website, and Facebook or other social media. Most participants hear about church announcements and events by word of mouth/announcements, newsletters, and/or emails.

Q30 How do you most often hear about church announcements and events? (Check all that apply)



The website is up to date and easy to navigate. Your Facebook is not updated frequently. Your newsletters are clear and provide helpful information.

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.

Your members are civically involved but their impact is scattered among many different areas.

This is wonderful in a way, but prevents you from having a unified mission or impact.

82% of respondents believed the church is working for social justice, but only 35% believe that your work is changing the surrounding community. The leader survey reports that 300 people came into your building for non-church activities over the past 3 months. However, even in 2019, only 24% believed local people were in the church building on a regular basis.

66% of survey respondents perceived the church as working with other organizations in the community for common goals. Parma-South Presbyterian Church has 10+ community partnerships (local governments, non-profits, businesses), including:

- Parma Heights Food Bank
- North Presbyterian Church
- Cleveland Habitat for Humanity
- Hunger Walk
- Southwest Community Based Services
- Cooperative Mission Association
- Homeless Standdown
- City Mission
- Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries
- Love In The Name of Christ
- Laura's Home Women's Shelter
- Samaritan's Purse
- Friend to Friend Prison Ministry
- Christmas gifts and school supplies for Buhrer Dual Language School
- Support of International Students at CSU

You also have several non-church organizations that bring community members into the building (Sharing space, not partners):

- Parma Heights Historical Society
- Cub Scouts
- Boy Scouts of America
- 4-H
- Ukrainian Academy (they are moving out in 2023, however, due to a strained relationship between the school and the church)

In national and international missions, you support:

- Cook Native American School
- Menaul Native American School
- Peace-Making Offering
- Bread for the World
- Church World Service Blanket Fund
- Doctors Without Borders
- Presbyterian Church of Cameroon
- Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship
- Dougbe River School, Liberia, West Africa
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance- PDA
- Presbyterian General Mission Fund

Notice that there are over 30 things listed here and you only average 46 people right now in face-to-face attendance.

You are likely making many small impacts through all this work and that is admirable. However, being spread so thin among so many causes (both the church and your participants) means it is impossible to find a feeling of unified effort and impact. It is also hard to communicate such a scattered mission to those who might support the work you are doing or even join in. **Think about a statement such as “Parma-South is the church that _____ for our neighbors.”** How would you fill in that blank? For some churches, choosing a mission focus by identifying the one area where the most people physically engage the work is helpful. For others, a discernment workshop (we have some models for this) can help you narrow it down.

FINANCES AND FACILITIES

FINANCES

Your current finances include:

- Budget for 2021 -
 - Income budget - \$415,511
 - Expense budget - \$438,493.
 - Tithes and offerings - \$255,743
 - While the planned budget included a \$22,982 deficit budget, the church ended up with a surplus of \$970.
-
-
- Other funds:
 - Non-endowment restricted funds - \$513,377 EOY 2021
 - Investment funds (includes endowment) - \$2,903,883 as of 10/31/22
 - Other non-budgeted funds (please specify) Key Bank checking - \$88,601 10/31/22
 - Other non-budgeted funds (please specify) Key Bank Money Market - \$58,813 10/31/22

Five years ago, the annual budget was \$387,542 with tithes and offerings of \$279,562. You have additional income from space rental and dividends from the endowment that fill the gap between tithes/offerings and budget, and these additional funds are used for operations and facilities.

A majority, or 57% of your survey respondents report giving financially at least monthly. Among survey respondents, most describe your finances as good or excellent. The pastor’s survey echoes this.

1% of the church budget goes to external organizations. Additionally, \$17,653 in non-budgeted collections goes to external organizations.

You have significant assets. It is time to ask - are you using your endowment and property for impact or simply for institutional preservation? Vital churches have giving that sustains their normal

operations and use their assets for impact in their community and world. People seeking a church in 2022 want to join in on doing good work in the world. **Your ability to show you are a church with a compelling mission and how you are actively living it out will make the difference in whether you are able to gain new participants and be a vital congregation.**

FACILITIES

Parma-South Presbyterian Church has facilities that participants and leaders identify as too big for your current congregational size. The facilities are in adequate to excellent condition according to the pastor and congregational surveys.

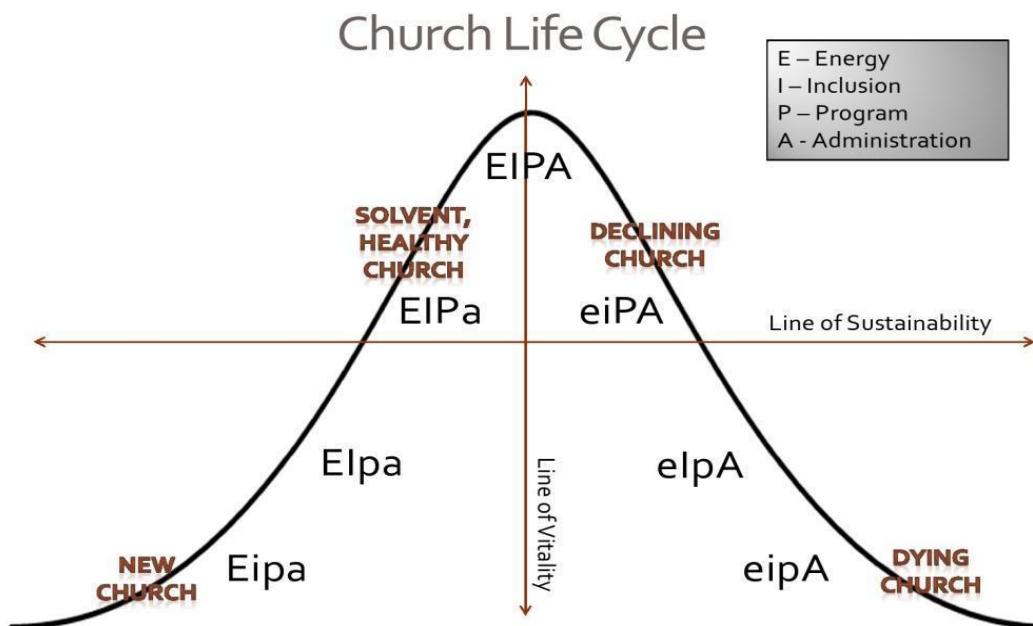
Photos on your website and social media show a sanctuary that looks clean but dated in style; however, other documents suggest some renovations occurred during the pandemic. There are no pictures of other spaces from recent years. Photos from 2018-2019 show other spaces to be clean and well-maintained. If you have freshened up your spaces, update your webpage to show them off.

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.



YOUR CONGREGATIONAL LIFECYCLE

Every congregation experiences growth and decline. These stages are marked by certain milestones that point to changes in organizational health and development. To better understand this, we use four indicators to measure health: energy, inclusion, programs and administration. At each stage in the life of a church, these indicators play a more or less active role. These roles are indicated by the upper and lower case letters on the graph.



The “Energy” indicator highlights the level at which the congregation is motivated into action around the vision and mission of the church. It speaks to the spirit of the faith community as well as its passion about its ministries.

The “Inclusion” indicator highlights the dedication and enthusiasm of church participants to invite people to be a part of the ministries of the church. It speaks to an outward focus on growth and an intentional commitment to hospitality.

The “Program” indicator highlights the level at which the church is able to start, grow and maintain ministries that transform both the community and the people within the church. These are particular to each church context and to the needs of the people within the church.

The final indicator, “Administration,” highlights the need of every church to have systems that promote growth through policies, procedures and staffing. Collectively, these indicators tell a story of where a church might be in their lifecycle.

Currently your church would be considered right at the line of sustainability between Quadrant 3 and 4. You have ample financial resources, but the dividends from that, as well as most of your energy and attention is going toward administration, operations and facilities maintenance. Your energy is spread very thin among many different missions and programs. There are fewer people to do the work of the church, and a longing for newer and younger people to join you, but a low level of skills for welcome and change. Your desire to grow also comes with the agenda that new people will take on the work that you are tired of doing, rather than how the church can support anyone new in their own life journeys.

You are at a point where you must take action in order to remain a functioning church. Those churches in your position that do not invest their energy and attention wisely can easily slip into over-focusing on administration. No one wants to join an organization that only exists to keep itself alive, so this will eclipse inclusion and growth, leading to acceleration of decline and loss of vitality.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

These recommendations could strengthen your church’s vitality in the next year:

- **Parma-South 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.** Being spread so thin among so many causes (both the church and your participants) means it is impossible to find a feeling of unified effort and impact. It is also hard to communicate such a scattered mission to those who might support the work you are doing or even join in. Think about a statement such as “Parma-South is the church that _____ for our neighbors.” How would you fill in that blank? For some churches, choosing a mission focus by identifying the one area where the most people physically engage the work is helpful. For others, a discernment workshop (we have some models for this) can help you narrow it down.
- **Given your financial resources now might be the right time to up your staffing to engage in making sure worship services are done with quality music, creative children’s programming is put in place and consider hiring a person with skills in community connections to energize your community outreach to people who could be potential members.** If you are attracting 10 new visitors a month what can you offer that will make them consider staying. Also how do you boost visitor traffic? Your members may not have the energy but you have the money to hire people. Your search for a new minister will bear fruit if you have a plan to reach your community and are already engaged in the work.

- **The good news is that having so many neighboring churches with similar values offers lots of potential for collaboration.** What partnerships might you explore with these churches in the future?
- **Your congregation is very low in openness to change and change skills.** You will need serious attention to this area if you seek to revitalize your congregation. There is no way to truly listen to what God is calling your church to do and be without being open to doing things in new ways. You will need to build your muscle for the days ahead. We can help with that, so talk to your consultant about ways you might begin to take on that challenge.
- **With participants reporting serious conflict in your past, you will need healthy conflict skills to go forward together as a congregation.** Perhaps those who have been trained as healthy conflict could encourage other participants to take a conflict course, or you could hold one just for your congregation. This could be a very beneficial part of the process as you all discern your next steps.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR PARMA-SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH :

*The question for you as members and leaders of Parma-South 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 above. 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.*



Parma South Visioning Town Hall

REVIEW

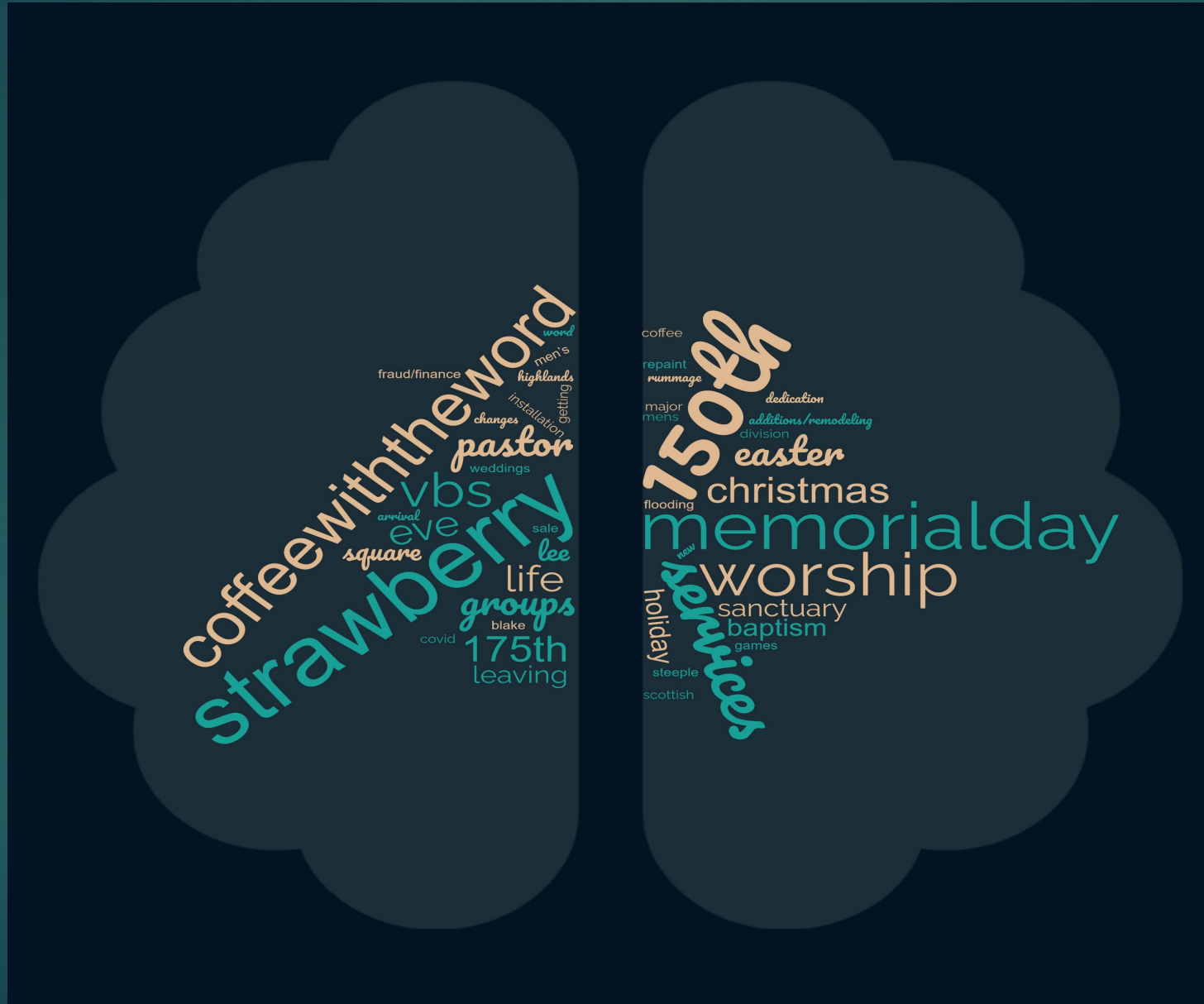
Three words that describe Parma South are: _____.



An important characteristic/enduring characteristic about PSPC is _____.



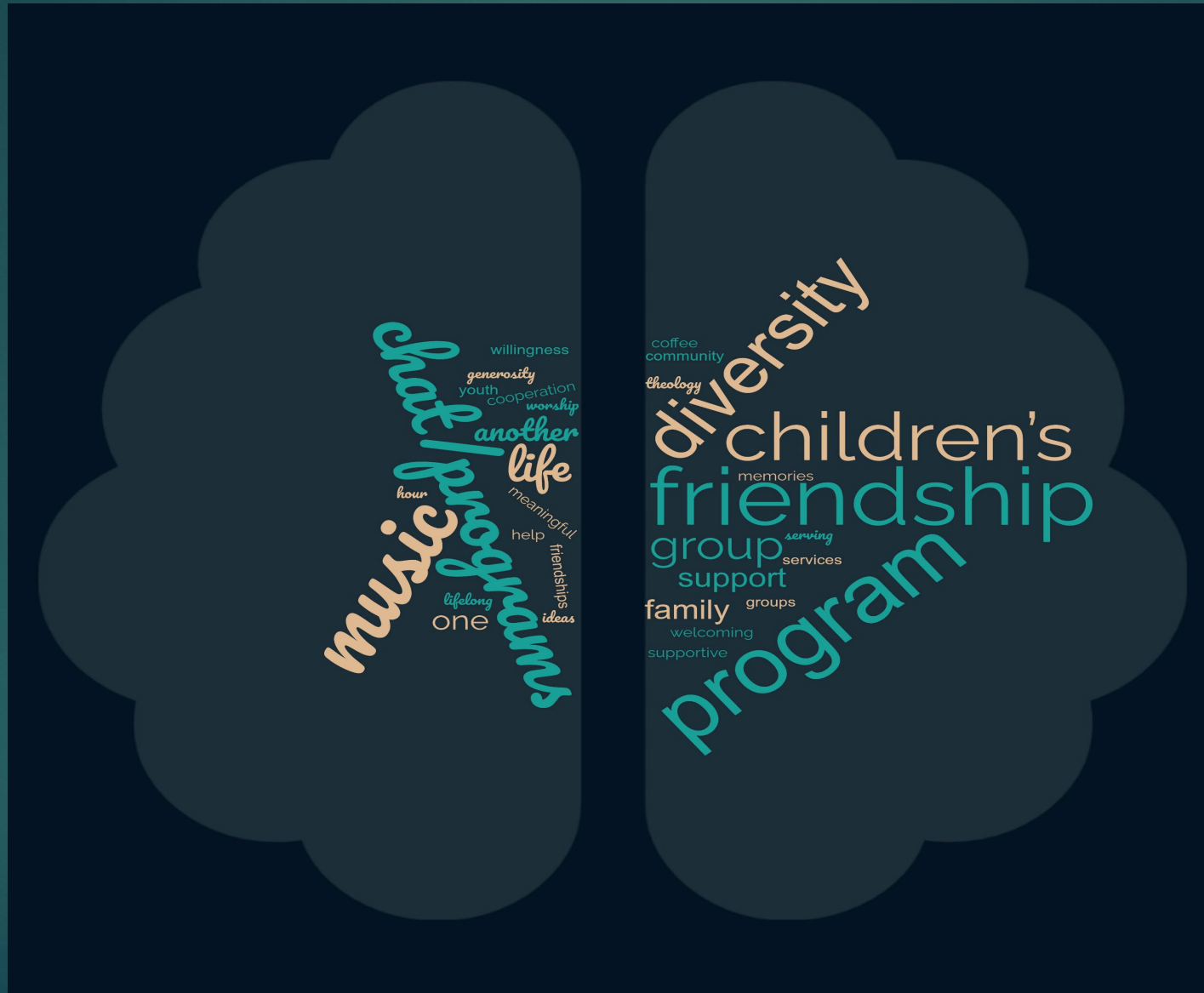
An important event in the life of PSPC was _____.



A time when we were most tested was _____.

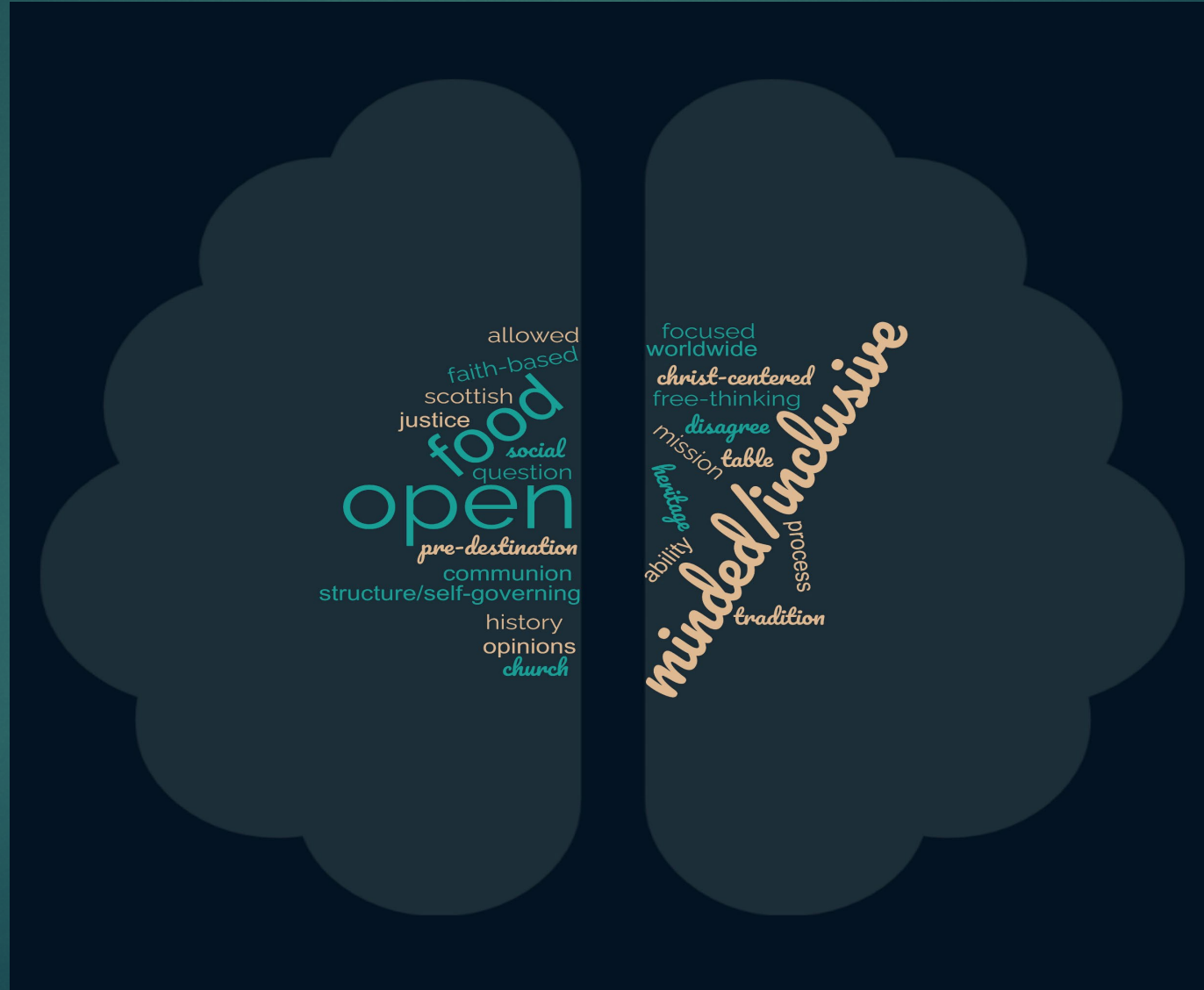


The thing I most appreciate about PSPC is _____.



The thing I most appreciate about being Presbyterian is

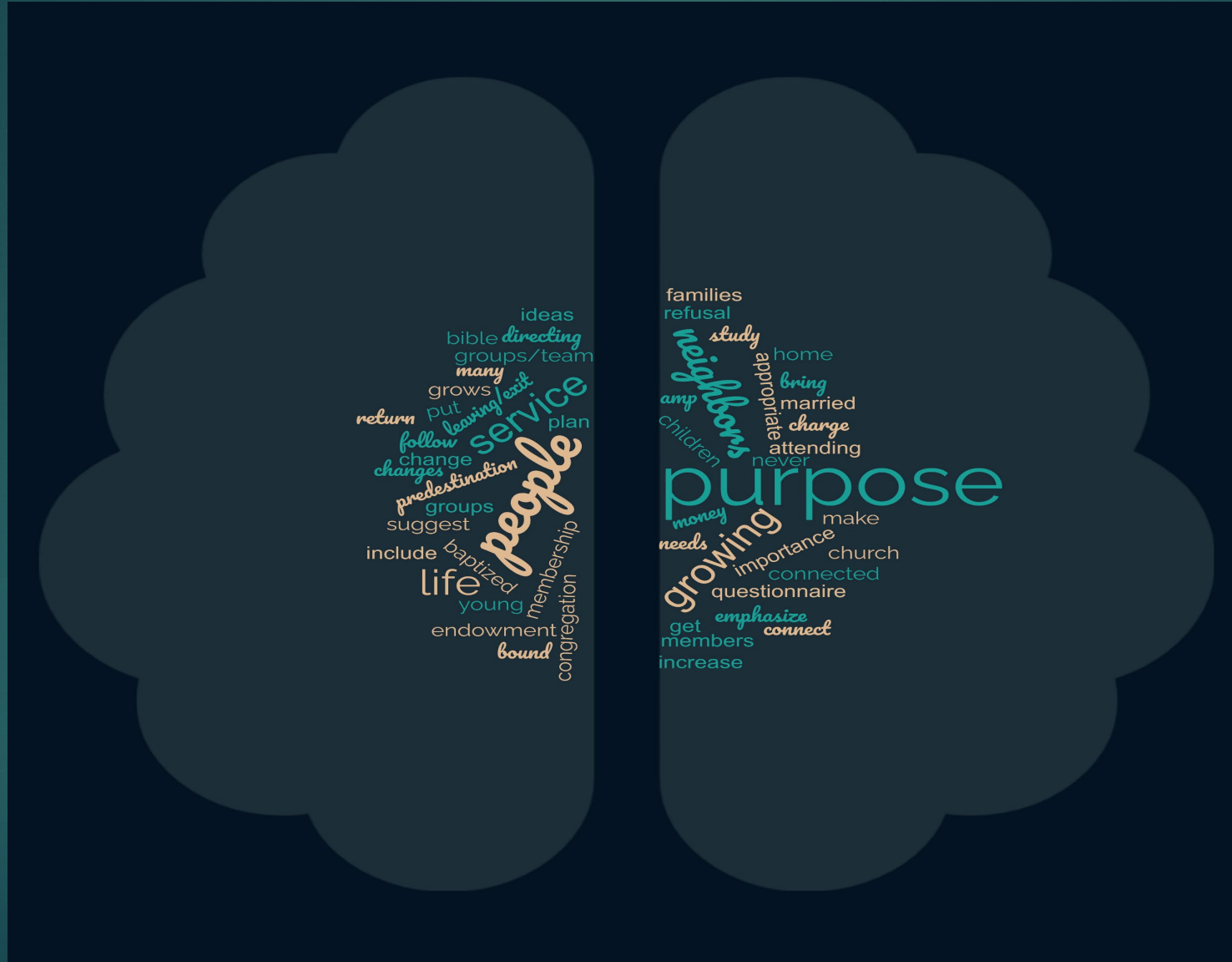
_____.



Something that has never made sense to me about PSPC is



One thing I have always wondered about us is _____.



Three things we must continue to do are _____.

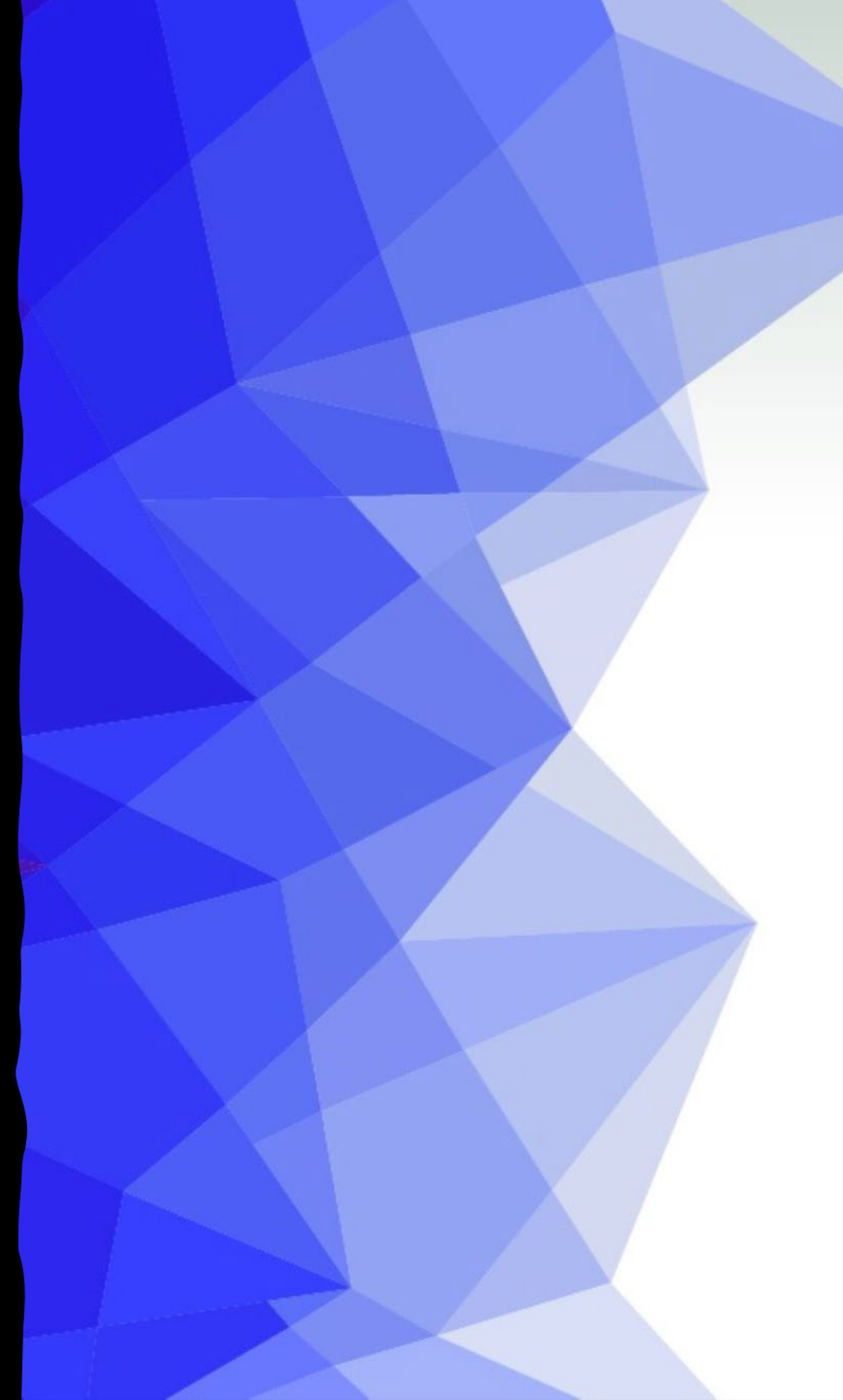


Three things we could stop doing are _____.



Parma South Town Hall 2 Review

by Blake Severson



As I think about
who we've
been, I
sometimes
wonder:



A word cloud in the left brain hemisphere, rendered in shades of teal and white. The most prominent words are 'shrinking' and 'how', both written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Other visible words include 'community', 'old', 'youth', 'screen', 'faith', 'unattractive', 'start', 'survival', 'events', 'attributes', 'retain', 'scriptures', 'changes', and 'modernize'.



A word cloud in the right brain hemisphere, rendered in shades of teal and white. The most prominent word is 'future', written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Other visible words include 'change', 'invite', 'growth', 'lack', 'technology', 'evangelism', 'legacy', 'advertise', 'choir', 'young', 'sermons', 'study', 'sharing', 'groups', 'grow', 'life', 'needs', and 'unattractive'.

*As I think
about who
we are now, I
am excited:*

leadership
foundation
follow-through
trying
willingness
building
journey
action
in-person
expanding
town-halls
god
coming new
fellowship
minister
change

process
name-tags
attending
increasing
community
forward
future
kids
sharing
church
direction
activities
together
serve
renters
music
changes

*As I think about
the future, I
wonder if it is
possible to:*



A word cloud in the left brain hemisphere. The most prominent words are 'attract' and 'merge'. Other words include 'small-groups', 'better', 'resources', 'grow', 'include', 'change', 'survive', 'vision', 'bring', 'faster-hymns', 'relocate', 'sell', and 'vision'.



A word cloud in the right brain hemisphere. The most prominent words are 'community building' and 'invite'. Other words include 'man-power', 'partnerships', 'serve', 'action', 'advertise', 'communicate', 'kids', 'help', 'more', 'community-center', 'contemporary', and 'youth-leader'.

*As I think about
the future, I am
concerned
about:*



tradition
salvation
aging
direction
VISION
decline
relevant
leave
kids



building
purpose
future
finances
membership
support
engagement
community
commitment
LOSS

One possible idea that the session is considering is a youth/family staff member. What concerns, suggestions and/or hopes would you share with us about this possibility?

tradition
salvation
aging
direction
VISION
decline
people
leave
relevant
kids

building
purpose
future
finances
membership
support
engagement
community
commitment
LOSS

Our church is facing being disconnected for our neighbors and wider community. What insights can you share that might help us discern what we might do to address this?

tradition
salvation
aging
direction
vision
decline
relevant
leave
kids

building
purpose
future
finances
membership
support
engagement
community
commitment
LOSS

What are you willing to sacrifice to ensure that we navigate the challenges of the future?

service
support
tradition
money
repurpose
building
time

old-ways
sanctuary
garden
cliques
energy
aesthetics
role
hymns
traditional

WHO WE ARE



Parma-South Presbyterian Church was founded in 1835 as the first Presbyterian Society of Cleveland located in Parma Township. In 1874, the church became Parma Presbyterian Church, and in 1937 it became Parma-South Presbyterian by combining the congregations of Parma Presbyterian with South Presbyterian Church in Cleveland.

As in the past, we are a community of faith that is strengthened by the Bible and a variety of church activities. We are dedicated to being more like Jesus in our daily lives through:

- Sunday services
- Prayer
- Music
- Bible study
- Care Team
- Fellowship
- Church school
- Local and worldwide mission.

We are a small, caring and loving congregation. We have a large facility that includes a beautiful sanctuary, an education wing (rented to a Ukrainian pre-school until August 2022), a multi-purpose room, several meeting rooms, and a number of church offices.

Our membership has declined from its peak in 1987 to 213 members at the present time. We are an older congregation that is predominantly Caucasian. In recent years we have welcomed a number of dedicated Cameroonians to our membership. It is our desire to increase our membership and diversity.



From 2007 to December 2021, we enjoyed the pastoral leadership of an enthusiastic, personable man with a long-term vision for our church. Hand in hand we paid the church debt and are financially stable, made numerous building improvements, developed a new vision statement and established a number of mission partnerships. He was called to a church in Eastern Pennsylvania.



The past two years have been a challenge for Parma-South as the pandemic has limited our activities and church attendance. We were closed for many months but continued some meetings and Sunday services virtually. During the time we were closed, we re-roofed the sanctuary, dining room/ kitchen, and offices. We also replaced the air conditioning, rebuilt the pipe organ console, purchased a new piano, constructed a handicapped parking area, and repainted the entire sanctuary. We are conducting the regular services with an average in-church attendance of about 50 parishioners. The Sunday services are also live streamed and watched by approximately 35 worshipers.