



MISSION STUDY REPORT | 2018

The purpose of this report is to familiarize the reader with Woodstown Presbyterian Church: our geographic location, our community, our facilities, our financial status, the people of our congregation, our worship, our strengths, and our hopes for the future of our congregation. What follows is a description of a congregation filled with love and gratefulness for God's grace in our lives. The work and grace of God is clearly evident in our church.

This report is the result of the Woodstown Presbyterian Church Mission Study Team's research of the various topics that are included in the report. It includes the results of a congregation-wide survey that was conducted during the month of December 2017 which was completed by 118 of our attendees, which is about 76% of our average worship attendees, and 52% of our total membership. Most importantly, it is the result of the team's attempt to discern God's purpose for our church through our prayers and the prayers of many of our church members who encouraged us along the way.

Our goal in preparing this report is to call a pastor who will identify with our mission statement, which is "Be Disciples, Make Disciples" and our vision for the future. One of the team's goals was to discern what God wants our church's mission to be so we could communicate this to a new pastor. Our team has determined as a result of our prayer and survey of the members that our church should focus on being disciples by following God's Word, and on making disciples; spreading the word of the Gospel to bring others into God's kingdom.

We have many strengths but we acknowledge that there is more work to do. This report describes what we want for the future of our church, our community, and for the furtherance of God's kingdom in the world as we wait for His return.

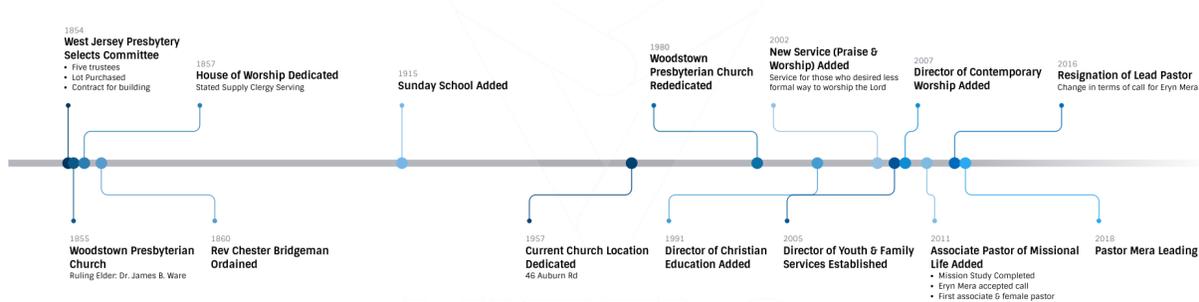


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Our History

Our church has a rich history. In 1854 a group of worshippers met in the town hall and were served by a variety of local Presbyterian ministers. Rev. Allen Henry Brown was credited as being the real founder of the church. Rev. Brown of Mays Landing first traveled to the borough's town hall to preach to sixty-three persons in June of that year. Over the next several months he made other trips to Woodstown and organized a group of local citizens to obtain a charter from the court. On October 4, 1854, a committee of West Jersey Presbytery was selected to organize a church in our borough. Five trustees were elected the following month, a lot was purchased, and a contract for a building was signed before the official organization of the Woodstown Presbyterian Church by the West Jersey Presbytery on November 22, 1855 with Dr. James B. Ware chosen as Ruling Elder. The small congregation continued to meet in the town hall, and their house of worship was dedicated on December 3, 1857. Stated supply clergy served its members until Rev. Chester Bridgeman was ordained and installed on January 5, 1860. Its membership slowly grew and their faithful giving resulted in the paying of all church debts in December 1865. The Trustees purchased a lot on Church Street for the church cemetery. A house and lot were donated to the church, which became the parsonage (manse) in 1868.



Several pastors served the church in the ensuing years and the church's membership, ministries, and missions grew. A new manse on Bowen Avenue was built in 1889 with its mortgage paid in full by 1893. A rotary system of Eldership began in 1913, and a Sunday School addition to the church building was completed in 1915. In the next few decades, the church outgrew its building and purchased property off North Main Street on Auburn Street where our present church is located. Dedicated in 1957, a wing was added in 1969, which enabled the formation of the Woodstown Day Care Center in the church. On November 23, 1980 a rededication of the Woodstown Presbyterian Church to the Lord's Work was held. The Woodstown Pastoral Counseling Center was established in 1988. The adult and youth tone chime choirs were begun in 1990, which was the same year the final addition and a renovation were completed to the church building. A new staff position, Director of Christian Education, was added in 1991, a steeple was erected on the building in 1995, and the church manse was sold in 1996 with a housing allowance added to the Pastor's terms of call.

Throughout the years, the church members served God and others in many ways with both local and international missions. In 2002, a new service (Praise and Worship) was added, which provided a service for those who desired a less formal way to worship the Lord. The position of Director of Youth and Family Services was established in 2005, which became two part-time positions in 2009, the Director of Youth Ministries and the Director of Children's Ministries. The Praise and Worship service had been moved from Sunday evenings to Sunday mornings at 9:00, and in 2007 the church created the position of Director of Contemporary Worship.

On March 29, 2012, after recognizing many of our members were concerned with the theological shift by the PCUSA, our Session began to prayerfully consider what direction our church would take. After determining we would not peacefully withdraw from the PCUSA, our leaders began to discern whether to actively concur with our denomination or to passively submit to it by joining the Fellowship of the Presbyterians, understanding that, by aligning with like-minded PCUSA churches, our church's relationship with our denomination and the West Jersey Presbytery would not change, but our congregation would concur with:

The Mission & Values of The Fellowship Community

The mission of the Fellowship Community is to build flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Fellowship Community's values include:

- ***Jesus-shaped Identity:*** *We believe Jesus Christ must be at the center of our lives and that making disciples of Jesus is the core of our ministry.*
- ***Biblical Integrity:*** *We believe the Bible is the unique and authoritative Word of God, which teaches all that is necessary for faith and life. The prominence of God's Word over our lives shapes our priorities, and the unrivaled authority of the Bible directs our actions to be in concert with Christ's very best for our lives.*

Churches within the Fellowship Community share the following beliefs...

- ***Accountable Community:*** *We believe guidance is a corporate spiritual experience. We want to connect leaders to one another in healthy relationships of accountability, synergy, and care.*
- ***Egalitarian Ministry:*** *We believe in unleashing the ministry gifts of women, men, and every ethnic group.*

- **Missional Centrality:** *We believe in living out the whole of the Great Commission – including evangelism, spiritual formation, compassion, and redemptive justice- in our communities and around the world.*
- **Center-focused Spirituality:** *We believe in calling people to the core of what it means to be followers of Jesus-what “mere Christianity” is and does – and not fixate on the boundaries.*
- **Leadership Velocity:** *We believe identifying and developing gospel-centered leaders is critical for the church, and a great leadership culture is risk-taking, innovative, and organic.*
- **Kingdom Vitality:** *We believe congregations should vigorously reproduce new missional communities to expand the Kingdom of God.*

During a special Session meeting on January 16, 2013, after months of investigation, research, discussion, and discernment – all wrapped in prayer - the Woodstown Presbyterian Session passed a motion to join the Fellowship of Presbyterians (the Fellowship Community).

Our mission statement, “Be Disciples, Make Disciples” led to an increase in the number of ministries and missions as well as the number of participants in recent years. In turn, the Session created another staff position, the Director of Missional Life, and Eryn Mera was hired. Once the church decided to call an Associate Pastor of Missional Life, a Mission Study was completed and an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) was formed. Pastor Eryn Mera, who had completed her studies at Princeton Seminary, accepted the call to be Woodstown Presbyterian Church’s very first associate – and female- pastor.

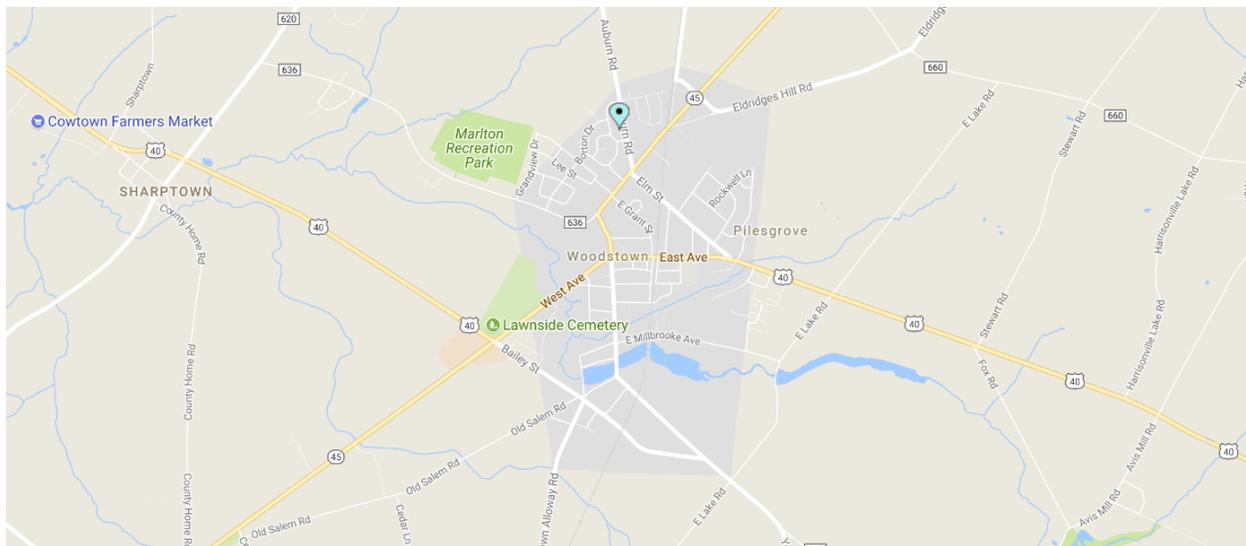
Our most recent lead pastor led our church for over ten years. His leadership contributed greatly to the growth of our congregation’s membership and ministries. The congregation became endeared to our pastor and his family over the years as the church flourished under his leadership. However, in June 2016, our lead pastor abruptly resigned due to personal misconduct, and this resignation caused many of our members to respond initially with feelings of anger, confusion, a sense of betrayal, and concern for our future. The emotions evolved with the passage of time to include love and concern for the pastor’s family, acceptance, forgiveness, and ultimately, an understanding that with hope and faith, God will show us the correct path to our future.

Since the resignation of our former lead pastor, Session addressed the role of our Associate Pastor of Missional Life, Rev. Eryn Mera, and made changes to her terms of Call. She has led our congregation since, along with Long-Term Pulpit Supply Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Paul Watermulder, from February through May 2017 (during Pastor Mera’s family leave following the birth of her twin daughters) and Senior Interim Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Robert Morrison, from mid-June 2017 through January 2018. At this time Pastor Mera, our Associate Pastor, is faithfully leading our church.

Our Community

Woodstown Presbyterian Church is located in the Borough of Woodstown, New Jersey. Woodstown is one of the more affluent areas in rural Salem County. It is a suburb within commuting distance of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Wilmington, Delaware. It is a historic community comprised of some homes that were built in the Revolutionary era and there are many members of the community who have lived here for generations. It is family-oriented neighborhood.

As of the 2010 United States Census, there were 3,505 people, 1,444 households, and 938.6 families residing in the borough. The racial makeup of the borough was 82% White, 11% Black or African American, 3% from other races, and 3% from two or more races.



There were 1,444 households out of which 32% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 46% were married couples living together, 15% had a female householder with no husband present, and 35% were non-families. Twenty-nine percent of all households were made up of individuals, and 12% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.41, and the average family size was 2.99.

In the borough, the population was spread out with 25.2% under the age of 18, 7.2% from 18 to 24, 25.4% from 25 to 44, 27.8% from 45 to 64, and 14.5% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 39.0 years. For every 100 females there were 90.2 males.

The Census Bureau's 2006–2010 American Community Survey showed that (in 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars) median household income was \$62,958 and the median family income was \$74,479. The per capita income for the borough was \$31,074. About 3.4% of families and 8.7% of the population were below the poverty line.



The geographical community from which our church attracts regular worshipers includes Woodstown, Pilesgrove, Alloway, Mullica Hill, South Harrison Township, Woolwich Township, Elmer, Pittsgrove, Upper Pittsgrove, and Logan Township. We have recently attempted to bring members in from neighboring Swedesboro, where a Presbyterian church has recently closed its doors. There are many individuals in these communities who do not regularly attend worship, and we believe there are many who have questions we can answer about the relevance of Jesus Christ in their lives. We seek to spread the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ to these communities in an attempt to make new disciples and expand God's kingdom.

Our Members and Attendees

In response to the recent survey question, "How would you describe our church?" several respondents described our church as "warm and welcoming" and "friendly". Other responses included loving, inviting, energetic, vibrant, welcoming, and active. When asked what they like about our church, 25% responded that we are warm and welcoming and have good fellowship. Another 30% percent said that we care and support each other well. We believe this accurately describes our members. Our church has 227 members. On a typical Sunday, our worship attendance is about 150-160. On average, 105 people attend the contemporary service and 50 people attend the traditional service.

Our ethnic composition is 99% Caucasian and 1% African-American. Of the survey respondents, 45% percent were between 55-69 years of age, 31% were ages 31-54, and 22% were over age 70.

Our Facilities

Our facilities are comfortable, warm, and inviting. The church building is located on a large tract of land nestled on a picturesque side street in the borough. Our steeple is like a beacon calling the community to come and worship, and the church's regular chimes pleasantly remind the community of the church's presence. The building has ample parking with the addition of a large parking lot adjacent to the building that was constructed last year. The doors and facilities are handicap accessible. The main floor of the church building houses: a beautiful sanctuary for contemplative, peaceful worship; a nursery; toddler room; office facilities; a large, full, working kitchen; sufficient and recently renovated male/female and family restrooms; a library; a "coffee spot" meeting room; and a large fellowship hall which houses our contemporary service and fellowship events. The basement of the building is spacious with several classrooms for our children's ministry.

Our Worship

We offer two worship services on Sunday mornings. One is a contemporary service that begins at 9:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall, and the other is a more traditional service that occurs in the



sanctuary at 10:30 a.m. Both services receive the same message from our pastor, who often follows a sermon series that is supplemented with small-group study for those in our congregation who are members of small life groups that meet weekly in various members' homes or other locations in the community. Both services have welcome teams ministries that oversee greeters and ushers who ensure that each person who walks into the church is welcomed and acknowledged in a friendly, caring manner. Our survey responses reflect that most respondents feel the worship service they attend reflects their personality and they enjoy it. They also feel that their worship experiences are meaningful, spiritual, and connect them with God.

Contemporary Worship

We hold a contemporary worship from 9:00 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. on Sundays. The congregation meets in our Fellowship Hall where a contemporary worship team opens on the stage with songs and prayer, followed by a relevant and applicable message with audio/visual aids. The atmosphere is welcoming and informal. The worship is led by the pastoral staff and our director of contemporary music. A group of volunteers oversee audio and visual components as well as live Internet streaming during the service. The service is broadcast via Church Stream on Facebook and YouTube. Families and small groups take turns providing coffee and treats after the service for fellowship, with some members of both worship services attending. Of our two services, this has the most attendees. Our average attendance for this service is 105.

Our Sunday morning children's ministry, eXcite, meets at the same time as our contemporary worship so parents have the option of leaving their children in the capable hands of our eXcite team or bringing them to worship with them.

Traditional Worship

We hold a traditional worship service from 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. on Sundays. We gather in the sanctuary for this service. This worship service has all of the traditional elements, and of course this means we sing the great hymns of the church. The message here is relevant and applicable to all. It is led by our pastor. Our director of music ministries plays a magnificent four manual organ and piano and directs a small chancel choir. It includes a lay liturgist, and a volunteer staff assists with the organization of the service. Audio/visual aids are used but not as frequently as in the contemporary service. Children are welcome at this service as well. Young children are provided, if they like, with worship bags that have crayons, pencils, and coloring sheets relevant to the message of the service. We partner with parents to create a space for families to worship together through the traditional elements of worship. Overall, this is a quieter, more reflective style of worship than the contemporary service. There are on average 50 attendees at this service. Many of our survey respondents indicated a desire to enliven our music ministry in this service.



Combined and Special Services

Every year in the Spring we hold a combined service in the sanctuary, followed by a church picnic outdoors for fellowship, lunch, and games for the children. In the Fall, we have a combined service outside under a large tent. This “Fall Kick-off” typically begins a new sermon series, encourages our members to invite new members to the church, and is also followed by a church picnic. We hold an Ash Wednesday service, a Maundy Thursday service, and at least three Christmas Eve services.

Woodstown Presbyterian Church enjoys and invites collaboration and partnership with other churches and members of our community who are not members of a congregation. We invite the community to participate in a cross walk on Good Friday and participate in a multi-congregation Good Friday Service. We participate in a joint or multi-congregational community Thanksgiving service. A recent community outreach that our members have enjoyed is the Church Has Left the Building mission. On this Sunday in October we leave the church building to be the church in our community; we organize various groups that go out into the community to bring God’s word and work to those outside of our church. This outreach has included visits to nursing homes, assistance with home building and/or remodeling projects for those in need, working at food pantries, organizing clothing donations, volunteering at non-profit organizations, and the list of projects grows every year.

Our Hope for the Future of Our Worship Services

When asked what activity should be given the highest priority by our church, our respondents overwhelmingly ranked worship as the most important. Our two styles of worship can be described as both a weakness and a strength. Our members overall feel strongly that there is a need for the two different styles of worship services. The two styles cater to our members’ different preferences, and this is also an asset we feel helps to bring new members to the church. However, a majority of our members feel that church unity is a challenge, which needs to be addressed. It is felt by many that the separation of the services prevents fellowship among the members and several feel we are two separate churches rather than a unified congregation. When asked what needs the most improvement in our church, this was a concern of many of our survey respondents. This is an area we hope our next pastor will help us address.

Our Missions and Ministries

Mission and ministry work is important to our church as is evident from the number and nature of our work, as set forth below. Sixty-six percent of those who responded to our survey were involved in church activities in addition to worship or a life group. Mission work and activities that grow the church were within the top three priorities of our members responding to the survey.

Alpha

Alpha is a video sermon series that seeks to introduce the basics of the Christian faith to anyone in our church and surrounding communities. It is an opportunity us to spread the Good News without pressure to those who are curious about the Christian faith. It has been a successful ministry that has brought individuals to a faith in Christ and new members to our church. Usually it is held at a location outside of our church where we provide a meal and a friendly, welcoming atmosphere that encourages non-judgmental questions and discussion.

Children's Ministry

See section on Child and Adult Education below.

Church Has Left the Building

On the fourth Sunday in October, instead of coming to church in the morning, our congregation joins other local churches as we go out and “be the church”. We dedicate this day of service to be God’s hands and feet. It is a special day about serving our local community and loving our neighbors through participation in local service projects. In the evening we gather as one body of believers from all denominations to worship together and celebrate God’s work of the day.

College/Military Care Packages

Our Deacons reach out to our church’s young people who are away at school or in the military by preparing and sending care packages to these loved ones who are temporarily away from the church.

Communication and Promotion

Our church is aware of the importance of social media in today’s world and the necessity of using these media to communicate and promote the ministries of the church. To further this goal, we have created the position of Communication Specialist. This position was added in January of 2018 to assist the Pastor and staff until our church is able to return to two full time pastors. Our Director of Children’s Ministries is currently acting in this role. Some of the main ways our church communicates are via social media, the website, our church social network “The City”, bulletins, and on-screen announcements during worship service.

Community Space

We welcome the use of our church by the members of the community who also are active in outreach. Our facilities are used as a meeting space for various outside groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Boy Scouts/Cub Scouts, a Christian Home School group, the local Women’s Club, the town’s pool association, and the DKG Beta sorority.

Divorce Care

Divorce Care is a weekly support group and seminar open to all, which is conducted by members of our church. It is a small support group of people who are experiencing separation and divorce. This program features twelve dynamic video seminars featuring renowned experts on divorce and recovering.

Dominican Republic Mission Team

Every year we send a team to the Dominican Republic for a week-long mission of love and fellowship. During the week we help to bring Vacation Bible School to various locations as well as assist with renovations of local homes. Each summer our team experiences God's love in a new way through this ministry.

Family Promise

Interfaith Hospitality Network was founded in New Jersey in 1986 in response to the growing need to provide shelter, meals, and comprehensive support to homeless families. We participate as a host church several times a year. The families are housed and fed for a week and then move on to the next participating church. Over 40 volunteers participate during the week as drivers, overnight hosts, laundry, meal, pantry, and dessert providers.

Grief Share

Grief Share is a grief recovery support group, open to all, that was started here in September 2007. It is a faith-based, scripture supported program that offers healing and hope for those who are hurting from the loss of a loved one. The group meets weekly at the church.

Healing Ministry

Our new outreach to the community and church is a healing ministry that is centered in prayer with a focus on healing. Meetings are in the church and the Wellness Center in Woodstown. Our Healing Prayer Ministers have gone through training and use evangelism, as well as intense prayer, to support those in need. This ministry is connected with the International Healing Rooms.

Life Groups

Our church fosters spiritual growth of its members by offering several small study, discussion, and fellowship groups. There are currently 13 life groups that meet at different times, days, and locations throughout the week. Sixty-five percent of our survey respondents were members of a life group. Many of the groups meet in the homes of our members, some meet at dining establishments in the community and others meet at the church. In these groups we delve into



the Bible and Christian literature to grow our understanding of God's Word and our relationships with God and one another. A majority of our members are involved in and regularly attend a life group. Some of our groups are: Full Cup A.M., Full Cup P.M., Life Groupies, Women of Worship, Just among Moms, Tuesday Night Men's Life Group, Mullica Hill Men's Group, Tuesday Morning Men's Group, Friday Morning Men's Group, and several others.

Love for a Lifetime

This program is offered to individual couples wishing to enhance their relationship. Couples are entertained and encouraged as they learn the principles to enrich their marriage. It is made available upon request.

Music Ministry

Our music ministry is provided by a chancel choir, praise band, and instrumentalists who lead hymns, liturgy, and music in worship (including gathering music, preludes, offertories, and postludes during the traditional service and contemporary Christian music during the praise service). In addition to our in-house ministry, we reach out to Friends Village, an assisted living/nursing facility, with caroling during the holidays, and participation with other churches for joint Christmas concerts and Good Friday services.

Pastoral Care Model

In 2010, with the beginning of our Stephen Ministry, we began moving from a pastor-centered model to a congregational-care model. We call upon our Stephen Ministers to assist with congregational care. They are well-trained, compassionate, and capable lay ministers. In addition, deacon care groups have been updated for 2018 and will be a focus in 2018. This will help to bridge the gap between services as well as to keep people connected and cared for through personal contact and follow up. We also use life groups as another source of care. While the pastor still visits, prays, and spends time with congregants, the care ministry is now accomplished by a variety of methods.

Prayer Ministries

Prayer is an important ministry at our church. We incorporate prayer through prayer requests and inclusion of the People's Prayer in the traditional service, communication cards, The City, and special mid-week prayer services. One to two times a year, we engage in a week of unbroken prayer. This week is an opportunity for the members of the church to take turns maintaining uninterrupted prayer throughout the week.

Sandwiches of Hope

Members of our church volunteer on Fridays to help make sandwiches that are distributed in Bridgeton at Bethany Grace Church every Friday at 3:30 p.m. This is a ministry that was started by Don Mills, and we are blessed to be involved in it!

Starting Point

Starting Point is an 8-week course, which provides an opportunity for non-judgmental, open dialog about questions of faith. This is for people beginning their faith journey, or any who have questions about their faith, where they may participate in frank and open discussion in an informal setting.

Stephen Ministry

Our Stephen Ministry includes trained and supervised members of our congregation, called Stephen Ministers, who provide one-on-one Christian care to people facing life challenges or difficulties. Stephen Ministers are caring Christian friends who pray for, and with, care receivers. They are not counselors. Their role is to listen and care in confidence. Often the care receivers are experiencing divorce, grief, loss of a job, loneliness, hospitalization, terminal illness, or other life difficulties. A Stephen Minister will typically meet with a care receiver one hour a week for as long as the care receiver will benefit from the relationship.

The Well

The Well is a community for women in recovery from sexual assault, sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. The mission of The Well is to provide a sanctuary along with an array of support services and educational opportunities for women who have been exploited. The Well has a residential program that provides long-term secure housing at no cost to the participants. In 2015 our church began assisting with the process of bringing The Well SJ to the Salem, Gloucester, and Cumberland County area. We have not recently been active in this ministry but are anxious to renew our participation with the assistance of our new pastor.

Youth Ministry

Our youth ministry focuses on teaching youth to be disciples of Christ by growing and deepening their faith along with a community of friends. We call it Ignite because that's what we try to do: ignite faith. Middle school and high school students come together to learn about God, play games, take trips, go on retreats, participate in fun events, and serve the community. We plan a yearly service trip for middle school students and a week-long mission experience for high school students.



Youth Alpha is also a component of our youth ministry. Youth Alpha is a film series designed to engage students in conversations about faith, life, and Jesus. It is held in the late winter/early spring and includes ten weekly interactive sessions that explore the basics of the Christian faith.

In high school, many of our youth commit to being a part of the church through Confirmation, which begins with participation in Youth Alpha and finishes with Youth Sunday, where the participants stand before the congregation to make their statement of faith, receive official certificates of confirmation, and are baptized if they have not experienced baptism.

Our church initiated and has been actively fostering the development of a Young Life organization in Woodstown. This organization's mission is to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and to help them grow in their faith. Young Life is based in Woodstown High School and led by our youth minister. It offers an opportunity for students to hear, learn and talk about love, life, and God in a nonjudgmental atmosphere of peers. Young Life is for any high school student and is geared toward students who do not typically attend a church or youth group.

Presently, we see a need for revitalization of our youth ministry. Although we do have some very active teens, we have had a drop in attendance. The majority of the youth in our church do not attend youth group and are not connected to a regular ministry. In the coming year we look forward to hiring a new youth director as our current director transitions to lead the community's Young Life full time. We see this area of ministry to be key in our church life and pray it flourishes in the years to come.

Our Child and Adult Christian Education

Child and Adult education was the second-highest area of priority, after worship, according to our survey respondents.

Children's Education

We are proud of our children's ministry! Developing in our children knowledge and a love of God is a priority of our church, and you can see that in our children's ministry. Children are an integral part of our church. We believe that by providing opportunities for children to know, love, and follow God, we ignite a passion in children so that in God's timing, they develop a transformative faith in God through Jesus.

During our contemporary worship on Sunday mornings, members of the children's ministry team provide a safe and nurturing environment for babies and toddlers while their parents enjoy worship. The rooms are equipped with pagers to put parents at ease and feel assured they will be contacted if necessary.



On Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. children from preschool age through third grade gather in the classrooms in the lower level of the church for our eXcite program. Here they worship together, participate in activities, and connect with children their own age to learn about God.

On Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. preteens in 4th and 5th grade are welcome to attend our eXcite eXtreme program. Here they engage in activities designed to encourage them to think and challenge them to know, love, and follow God. They meet again as a youth group on Sunday evenings from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for games, crafts, field trips, and service projects. A new part of the children's ministry this year is Friendship 101, a life group for 4th and 5th grade girls.

Our average total church school attendance is 21 children for children's worship and 10 children for our Sunday evening eXcite eXtreme program for preteens.

In the spring, the children of our church lead a worship service on Young Disciples Sunday. Children plan a worship service, lead worship singing, are greeters and ushers, read scripture, make a video, and participate in a sermon.

Vacation Bible School is a highlight of our summer. Our children and many others from our community gather for a week of high-energy fun with games, stories, snacks, and music that all relate to an exciting and educational theme which focuses on teaching the children about God.

Adult Education

The core of adult Christian education in our church is provided through our life groups. The purpose of these groups is to foster spiritual growth by building relationships with other believers, provide for Christian fellowship among their members, and encourage service to Christ through outreach into the community.

Associate Pastor Eryn Mera coordinates and supports our system of life groups. Many of these groups have been meeting for years, while others are fairly new. Six of the groups are for women, five for men, and four are mixed. These groups generally study books of the Bible and books on Christian theology. Normally the study topics are selected by the individuals within the group but sometimes the groups study a church-wide topic.

Periodically, the church offers an Alpha series for adults. This series is opened to the public in general and serves as an introductory course for inquirers. We also offer a marriage counseling course called "Love for a Lifetime" and a group counseling series called "Grief Share".

One of the significant concerns expressed by our members in our recent survey was a need and desire for more adult Christian education. A majority of the respondents of the survey indicated that they felt they had an adequate understanding of the tenets or beliefs of our Presbyterian denomination. However, some of the comments expressed in the survey with respect to this question reflect confusion about what our tenets are and/or how they came to be. Approximately

half of the respondents of the survey felt that there are Presbyterian tenets they did not agree with. The other half were either in agreement with them or were unsure. The majority of the comments that indicated disagreement dealt with the Presbyterian stances surrounding homosexuality, gay marriage, and gender. These responses are consistent with our decision to join the Fellowship Community. Other comments reflected an ignorance of or confusion about the teachings with an inference that more education and discussion of Presbyterian thought would be welcomed.

Our Finances

Our church has a dedicated finance committee that: manages our endowment fund and makes recommendations to Session about investments and disbursements; oversees the counting and depositing of general fund and special contributions to the church; and prepares a yearly budget recommendation. Our vision with respect to stewardship is that God will lead our congregation to embrace the Biblical teaching of growing spiritually by faithfully giving the first-fruits of their income to the Lord's work through our church. We also encourage the congregation to use their spiritual gifts, time and talents to further our mission.

As a result of our 2018 stewardship campaign, we received 84 pledges for a total amount pledged of \$362,000 for the year 2018. This represents a 6% increase over the total pledged for 2017. We expect a total income in the year 2018 of \$457,299.

As of January 2018 our endowment fund was worth \$674,196. This fund gained \$40,023 since January 2017.

In 2013 and 2014, the church borrowed \$300,000 to pay for capital improvements to our building and parking facilities. During May 2017 we engaged in a mortgage reduction campaign. That campaign raised over \$57,000 which was used to pay down the principal of the loan. We are currently working toward a goal of paying this debt off in its entirety within the next three years.

Our 2017 annual report details the specifics of our 2018 budget, which anticipates a total expenditure of \$457,519.

Our Congregation's Vision for a New Pastor

Most importantly, we trust in our Father to lead us to the pastor He has chosen for our church. We acknowledge that He knows best what we need, and He will provide it through our next Lead Pastor. Our congregational survey asked our members what characteristics they believed were most important in a lead pastor. There were many responses. To the extent that there were common or similar themes in the responses, we thought they were important to include in this report. Some of the dominant characteristics included the following, someone: with a strong



faith and love for Jesus; knowledgeable about the Bible; inspirational; dynamic; charismatic; one who can teach and relate sermons to everyday life; caring; kind; personable; accessible; approachable; who will communicate with the members well; and will be a good leader. Many of the responses also indicated that it was important that the pastor know that our church is comprised primarily of members who are generally more in agreement with the conservative Fellowship Community interpretations of Scripture. We are looking for a lead pastor who will share and promote our values and expand our Scriptural knowledge in an effort to grow and maintain our faith. The pastor will focus on encouraging, maintaining and developing our many ministries in conjunction with our lay leaders and associate pastor.

Summary and Conclusion

Our church is eager to move through this transition period and we look forward to welcoming a new pastor to lead us. The majority of our congregation is optimistic about the future as we focus on being disciples and making disciples. We are excited to see what God has in store for our church in the coming months. We are generally satisfied with our worship, which is our priority, but we would like to work on unifying our congregation and learning more about Biblical teachings. We want a strong lead pastor who will lead and work with us to accomplish our mission and who shares our vision.

Respectfully submitted,

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