

# *FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ALLENTOWN*



## *NOTE TO READERS*

The following document contains two parts:

- A) The complete Report of the Mission Study Task Force as submitted to Session (pages 2-17); and
- B) A summary of Session's responses to the recommendations in that report (pages 18-20).

*Please read the entire document  
in order to fully understand  
how we hope to journey as a congregation  
toward the future to which we believe God is calling us.*

**First Presbyterian Church of Allentown**  
**Mission Study**  
**May 2008**

**Our Vision**

We are people who expect to learn from God's Word, expect to work as God's hands, expect to encounter God in all people, and expect to rejoice in God always.

*"As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world...As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

*John 17: 18, 20.*

**Mission Statement**

We come with the expectation of encountering God in worship and through each other. We remain with the expectation that Jesus Christ will continue to nurture us through Biblical instruction and caring for each other. We go out with the expectation that the Holy Spirit will guide us in our service to those we encounter in our lives. We expect that our encounters with others will make a difference in their lives because God dwells within us and works through us. We have these expectations because God has blessed us with His great love. We have these expectations because God has great expectations of us.

**The Charge to the Mission Study Task Force**

The Mission Study Task Force (MSTF) was appointed by the Session in February 2008 "to prepare for the Session a comprehensive study of the mission and ministry of First Presbyterian Church in order to discern what God is calling this congregation to do in the community and in the world, and to evaluate what resources FPC has and to recommend what will be needed to carry out FPC's calling." (From the Rationale accompanying the approved motion)

In communications circulated among the pastors and the Task Force, it was agreed that the MSTF was charged with preparing a report about the church's future focus of its resources/talent/energy. Any decisions about the mission and program ministry of the church will have staffing implications, but the MSTF was not charged with making any kind of recommendation to the Session about the pastoral staffing model. The Task Force accepted this charge.

With prayer as the centerpiece of all of its work, the Task Force members' discernment process included study, research, and hearty discussions. We examined Percept's Ministry Area Profile 2005 and the Positioning Study prepared by Dr. Peter J. Pizor and "New Horizons Associates' Summary of Findings" from congregational conversation. We reviewed the results of "Building Spiritual Connections", the US Congregational Life Survey as well as the Interim Coordinating Council's notes from a series of town hall meetings conducted in the fall of 2007. Recognizing that some members of the congregation may not have been present for the Congregational Life Survey or the town hall meetings, we developed a survey that was mailed to the congregation and posted on the church's web site. We received more than 245 responses, including at least 30 from people who characterized themselves as inactive members. A member of the task force met with the current pastoral staff seeking their ideas for our church and about their own ministries. Common themes emerged from our study and discussion and led to the preparation of this report.

## **Core Values of Our Congregation**

The Mission Study Task Force reviewed surveys and shared their own experiences as members of the church; our study revealed a list of core values of this congregation:

We are believers who try to live our faith in our daily lives.

We believe in prayer.

We believe that worship is the basic function of the church.

In worship, we believe in a music ministry that speaks to each of us with variety and creativity.

In worship, we believe in preaching that speaks to us where we are with messages relevant to our daily lives; we also believe in preaching that challenges us to social consciousness and mission to the larger community, locally, nationally, and internationally.

We believe in discipleship, in walking with Jesus and in seeking spiritual growth.

We believe in witnessing to Christ's love through participation in mission activities within the larger community.

We believe that we are called to be a welcoming community, celebrating diversity and opening our doors to all who would enter.

We believe in each other; relationships among the members of the congregation bind us together.

We believe that the vitality of a congregation is seen in its witness and caring for its members and the wider community; growth in membership and giving will follow from faithful witness.

We believe in education that prepares our children and youth for discipleship.

We believe in education and programs for adults that stimulate the intellect, speak to the issues that concern us, and challenge us to consider our spiritual foundations.

We believe in the stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.

We believe in being good stewards of God's gift of the earth and its creatures.

## **The Strengths of Our Congregation**

The Mission Study Task Force found that the congregation is pleased with the pastoral staff and wants to keep the staff that we have even as we look to future staffing. At the same time, we respect the program, administrative, and building maintenance staff for their dedication, talent, and contributions to the life of the church.

The programs for children and youth are exemplary both in substance and participation rates.

Our traditional worship services, preaching, and music have been affirmed but we have seen significant interest in creativity and innovation that will enhance the worship experience.

With some pride, we can point to mission outreach that has been a part of our tradition but the clearly identified need for greater hands-on involvement of more of our members provides a counterpoint to that pride.

Our church building serves both the congregation and the wider community; we seek to maintain the building for years to come. We are pleased to open our doors to many groups from the community keeping our church building a vibrant, alive center of activity throughout the week.

We recognize that our congregation is strengthened by the theological diversity of its members and, in particular, we appreciate the Arabic ministry as an integral part of our congregational life.

We cherish the relationships that we have formed and hope to enhance those relationships through creative social programs and work projects. We care about each other, appreciating pastoral care and parish ministries.

We are grateful for the lay leaders who serve on boards and committees, teach, preach, sing, sew, and provide extraordinary service to the congregation and the wider community.

## **The Challenges We Face**

The church exists not for itself but for the fulfillment of God's purposes; we are called to serve in God's name. Stewardship of our time, talent, and treasure is our response to God's goodness. Our church's future depends on our communal discernment of a vision for our congregation.

The congregation is a large one; size can be both a joy and a challenge. A large congregation can provide many things to many people; each person can find his or her own niche, special place for service and fulfillment. At the same time, individuals, and families, can get lost in a large, sometimes overwhelming congregation. The need for nurturing relationships among the members was cited numerous times as important for the vitality of the congregation. Small group ministry, all-church social events, and opportunities to work together in mission or service to the congregation are needed to foster relationships.

Hands-on mission through projects that engage the heart, mind, and body outside the confines of the church must be enhanced not only for the sake of the larger community but also for the continuing faithfulness of the congregation to Christ's call to service. We found that very worthy projects are underway but they need more people willing to dedicate time to mission projects.

The community around the church is changing. The urban core of Allentown has seen enormous changes. The manufacturing jobs that were the backbone of the local economy have disappeared as industry has closed or moved out. Poverty in the inner city is a way of life. The City has been challenged by the erosion of its tax base and the subsequent struggle to provide services. The community's newest members are primarily immigrants of Latino heritage whose culture is different from that of most of the members of First Presbyterian Church. How will this church meet the challenge presented by cultural change, economic decline, and poverty?

Church members long for growth in spirituality. They need to pray, study, listen to each other, and share their thoughts and dreams. The church needs to provide the safe places for people to question and to find their way.

At the same time, "being Christ in the world" means preaching and teaching the word, sharing the good news of Christ. Evangelism in a traditional sense represents a challenge but the congregation affirms that others will be drawn to Christ by our good works and exemplary lives.

In general, the church is home to, and welcoming to, people of all ages; there are opportunities for intergenerational exchanges. The future of the church depends on the next generation and it is clear that we are losing a good portion of that generation. Young people growing up in the church are offered a Christian experience that will sustain them for years to come but, too often, these same young people do not return to the church after graduation from high school and college. Locally, twenty-year olds are moving out of the area and it has been noted that efforts need to be made to enhance the life of the community. The church will need to be open to new styles of worship and preaching that speak to a younger generation.

For the current year, the congregation has adopted a deficit budget. Despite admirable efforts to cut costs, the cost of maintaining the church's ministry rises regularly and the giving of the congregation has not kept pace. We recognize that the financial capacity of our membership to support the work of the congregation has not been fully realized.

## **Pastoral Staff – Functional Areas**

Any change in pastoral staff can mean an adjustment for all pastors and their duties. The Task Force identified the following pastoral functions that need to be performed:

To inspire;  
To pray;  
To preach;  
To cast a vision;  
To teach;

To lead;  
To engage the congregation in mission;

To facilitate small group ministry;  
To facilitate men's and women's ministries;  
To facilitate young adult ministry;  
To facilitate ministry for children and youth;  
To administer Sacraments, perform ceremonies;  
To provide for worship;  
To provide pastoral care.

## **Recommendations of the Mission Study Task Force**

### **Pastoral Staffing**

We believe that First Presbyterian is on the brink of a new vision of inspiring and leading our members to grow in faith and spirituality and a new calling to service in the community, the nation, and the world and that, in years to come, we will be recognized as the leader in mission in the Lehigh Valley.

- We recommend a leader who will have the gift of inspiring excitement and joy in our worship and congregational life and a passion for mission that will engage the hearts, minds, and hands of the congregation.
- We recommend a new pastor who can be a facilitator who inspires the best in both staff and laity. He or she will encourage the other members of the staff to explore their ministries allowing them to preach, teach, and lead as they are called.

The current pastoral staff has demonstrated an eagerness to work with each other that has provided innovation in worship, congregational life, and pastoral care. We value their gifts and hope that they will continue in service at First Presbyterian for many years to come. We are blessed with a multi-talented, many-faceted, dedicated pastoral staff who are eager to be stretched and called to new aspects of ministry.

- We recommend that the Session explore, and expand as needed, the list of pastoral functions that are to be performed and, as a complementary exercise, explore how the current pastoral staff, along with new pastoral staff, might fulfill these duties.
- We urge the Session to provide support specifically for each pastor. It may not be necessary to add administrative support staff; evaluating current staff with a view to changing assignments may provide the solution. We hope that the Session will consider adding new administrative support staff if reassignment does not achieve the desired result.
- We encourage the exploration of the ways that lay persons may provide greater assistance in the day-to-day tasks of the congregation.
- We recognize that, as the members of the congregation enter their retirement years, the need for pastoral care will increase.
- We recognize that the staff functions identified and the recommendations included in this report will provide staffing challenges. In part, we recommend an examination of the roles of existing pastoral staff for adjustments that fulfill identified staff function areas.
- We recommend that the Session update job descriptions and make compensation consistent with job descriptions.

### **Programs**

Mission: We are at a good place in our church's life as our internal programs are functioning well. It is time for the church to find a larger place in the life of the larger community. To do so will require the commitment of Session and the congregation to transition to a church whose face is mission, a church that is dedicated to service and sharing the Good News.

- We recommend pastoral and lay leadership focused on spiritual formation to support the work needed to achieve this transformation.

We have included with this report a profile of our community that speaks both to the diversity of our population and the needs of that community. Our church's membership comes from many

corners of the Lehigh Valley but our growth has been in the more affluent sections of Allentown and the surrounding suburbs. We cannot ignore the challenges facing the City of Allentown and the residents of the inner city, many who represent a new, and different, community. In order to meet those challenges,

- We recommend that we contemplate how we may, in the future, need to seek new ways to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community just as we have reached out to the Arabic-speaking community.
- We recommend considering the Arabic ministry as a model for reaching out to the Latino community.

Fellowship: Within the internal life of the church, however, there is a need for building relationships by providing greater opportunities for fun and fellowship. We are a large congregation, and we yearn to know one another better. In a tradition of caring for one another and enjoying each other's company:

- We recommend more activities such as church fairs, potluck suppers, picnics, small groups coming together for fun, study, or mission, and other forms of fellowship.

Education:

Children -- We have seen that the programs for children are well received but not always as supported with volunteers as is needed. These programs are important and should be evaluated according to the number of children participating and the level of support by adult volunteers. In addition, the participation in the children's programs for older elementary age children is lagging behind other age groups suggesting that these programs should be evaluated for this older groups needs. With respect to Youth Club, the children's choirs continue to bring out many children who enjoy the participation in worship and growth in their own skills. Although the enthusiasm of the children who participate in Youth Club has been demonstrated and the substance of the program is well-done, we have noted a decline in attendance. At the same time, Youth Club and other programs require a significant commitment of volunteer time; recruitment and retention of laypersons can be challenging.

- We recommend that the Christian Education curriculum for children in the upper elementary grades be revised to provide an interactive, multi-age level experience. Many less traditional curricula are available and should be explored.
- We recommend an examination of Youth Club, as well as other programs for children and youth, with a view to determining the best use of volunteers' time.

Youth -- We have seen that all programs for youth are very well received. These programs are important and should be continued with minor changes. The eager participation of our teens in youth fellowship, choir, and opportunities for mission is ample evidence of the success of these programs. The youth benefit from the Christian Education curriculum that is interactive and blends multiple grade levels.

- We recommend that the Christian Education curriculum for youth continue to be updated and expanded.
- We recommend that in considering the entire staffing plan that more time be allotted to Youth Ministry by the both Pastoral and non-ordained staff.

Young Adults -- The twenty-something generation is under-served and severely under-represented in the life of the congregation. Young people who have grown up in the church find that there are few opportunities for fellowship, spiritual growth, and mission when they enter the work place or return from college.

- We recommend an eager pursuit of ministry to young adults.

Adults -- We recognize excellence in the Adult Christian Education programs, both on Sunday mornings and during the week. On Sunday mornings, however, we are disappointed by the number of people who actually participate in the classes.

- We recommend offering fewer classes each Sunday, freeing space for a burgeoning youth program;
- We suggest offering a coffee hour for fellowship, casual conversation, and building relationships;
- We suggest engaging more outside speakers.

Worship: Our worship service format provides inspiration to many people of our congregation and should be continued. Innovation and creativity are welcome and we have seen, in recent months, that the congregation has enjoyed the varieties of worship experience that have been offered in the traditional setting.

A tradition of strong preaching is essential to the spiritual growth of the congregation. Preaching must be from the heart, speaking to the day-to-day concerns of the members; at the same time, it needs to be Biblically-based, addressing issues of concern in the world and enthusiastically calling all members of the congregation to service in the church and in the world.

- We recommend that all of the pastoral staff be given regular opportunities to preach and that they be encouraged to explore their preaching vocation, strengthening their abilities and finding the prophetic voice that will uplift and inspire.

One of the strengths of the worship service is its music. The music program is strong because of enthusiastic lay participation and exceptionally fine professional staffing. Church members enjoy traditional hymn-singing but welcome the introduction of new hymns from time to time. There is, however, a clearly articulated call for a contemporary worship experience – not as a substitute for traditional worship but as an addition to the church’s offerings.

- We recommend the exploration of a contemporary service as an addition to the worship service schedule, perhaps after the Sunday morning services or on Saturday evenings.

Stewardship: We applaud the stewardship campaign’s call for time, talent, and treasure of this past year and its theme that “Stewardship is everything I do after I say ‘I believe’”! In this year of a deficit budget, we recognize the special financial challenges of the congregation. Stewardship will indeed be about how we spend our lives.

- We believe firmly that a new vision of spiritual growth and outreach in mission will be catalysts for a growing membership.
- We recommend accurate membership rolls and charge Session with assuring that the membership rolls are adjusted yearly, with no exceptions, and that they are reported accurately.

Pastoral Care: Caring for the needs of the members of the congregation as they face life’s joys, sorrows, and crises is a strength that was recognized by the Task Force, surveys, and other congregational feedback. The work is appreciated and needs to be continued as it has been performed in recent years. We recognize, however, that the demographics of the congregation suggest that there will be increasing numbers of older adults who will be needing pastoral care.

- We recommend careful consideration and preparation to meet the needs of a growing number of older adults.

Other Ministries: Partnerships with other organizations, churches, and ministries are an important part of this congregation’s life and ministry. These alliances should be maintained, explored, and expanded as they contribute to the church’s mission.

- We recommend keeping and expanding the Arabic ministry;
- We encourage expansion of our relationships with churches and ministries in other countries to include visits and other exchanges.

Lay Leadership: We are a large congregation with countless programs run or supported by our lay leaders. Although this involvement is strong, we can continue to improve. First, we find that we are overusing some people and need to encourage more full participation in leadership and supporting roles

- We recommend developing, and using, a working, effective time and talent database.
- We recommend charging all committees to examine their practices, procedures, and programs for the purpose of discontinuing ineffective programs and expanding successful programs. Develop a procedure for the examinations. The focus needs to be forward-looking, not retrospective. How does what we are doing fit into the congregation's mission and the purpose of the committee; how well are we doing the work? How can the church's resources, especially human resources, be used most efficiently and effectively?
- We suggest providing classes that teach effective meeting management and leadership skills to members of boards, committee chairs, and other lay leaders.
- We recommend exploring every opportunity for laypersons to participate in ways that will assist the pastoral staff. Is pastoral involvement in a committee or project essential either because the work cannot be accomplished without their leadership or because their involvement is mandated? Are there committees/projects that will benefit from pastoral leadership while, at the same time, are able to go forward with a combination of significant lay leadership and reduced pastoral involvement? Can the committee/project become self-sustaining, that is, succeed with little or no pastoral involvement?

Operations/Physical Assets:

- We recommend the planning now for a capital campaign to expand the CE wing to accommodate an expanding youth program.
- We recommend replacing/fixing the Fellowship Hall sound systems.

## A Brief Congregational History and a Look at Our Facilities Today

First Presbyterian Church of Allentown has ministered to the spiritual and social needs of the Lehigh Valley since it was established on Sept. 30, 1831, as one of the area's earliest - if not the first - organized religious bodies with a resident pastor. The congregation first occupied a small two story facility on the east side of Fifth Street. First Presbyterian was distinctive at the time for being the only local church to offer services in English rather than German typically spoken in other congregations.

From the beginning, the congregation's life was marked by continuous growth in membership and services to the community. This spurred the construction of a new church building in 1838 on the Fifth Street site of the present-day Allentown art museum, with a Sunday school addition built in 1855. At the turn of the last century, an even larger structure was erected, along with a mission church at Ninth and Tilghman Streets and, in 1925, a Bible school building.

In 1958, First Presbyterian moved to its current site at Tilghman Street and Cedar Crest Boulevard. Its flourishing ministry was reflected in the 1989 addition of a fellowship hall, the chapel, the East Wing, the Commons and expanded educational facilities and office space. In 2000, the congregation built more office space, expanded the library, and renovated the sanctuary and substantial parts of the education wing.

The entire building contains 52,000 square feet. The sanctuary (including the balcony) can seat 1,000 people and 100 more can sit in the chapel. Fellowship Hall has a fully-equipped stage, can seat 350 people, and the large, industrial-sized kitchen can feed them in one hour. The hall may also be converted into a full-sized basketball court.

There are 22 classrooms. During a typical month, these rooms and other areas of the building are used for church-affiliated activities such as preschool, committee meetings, choir rehearsals, Youth Club, Bible studies, and sewing, quilting and shawl knitting groups. Outside agencies, such as scouts and Alcoholics Anonymous, and other groups, such as tutoring, crafts, and dance classes, also use our building. These activities result in our building being used more than 470 times in a typical month.

Our church is home to a magnificent 4,000-pipe Austin Pipe Organ, in the Neo-Baroque Style. It was installed in 1959, has been refurbished over the years, and is in good condition.

The boilers are only a few years old and are in good condition. The air conditioning system is older, but is still in good condition. Portions of the roofs will probably need to be replaced during the next 5 years, beginning with the East Wing and Chapel (which is past its normal lifespan) and Fellowship Hall.

The playground has recently been totally renovated. A new Memorial Garden has been constructed on the grounds. Our church is surrounded by 11 acres with approximately 250 trees and shrubs.

Clearly, we at FPC are blessed with a rich history of faithful service. We are also well served by our physical plant that will continue to support our work for many years to come.

## A Look at Our Financial Situation

First Presbyterian Church of Allentown has historically managed to be in a healthy financial position from an operating perspective as well as being responsive to both local and world mission giving. By exercising good stewardship, even with the many additions and renovations FPC has made to the physical plant, there is no long- term debt. Over the past seven years ended December 31, 2007, annual operating revenue has steadily increased from just over 1.5 million dollars to just over 2.0 million dollars. During the same period, total annual benevolence and restricted mission expenditures have increased from just under 280 thousand dollars to just under 450 thousand dollars. In addition to our sizeable operating budget, we are blessed to have many other specific purpose and endowment funds to respond to other needs.

Pledging units have fluctuated a bit over the seven- year period with pledging units for 2007 at 884 compared to 923 giving units in 2001 or at a level of just under 96%. Dollars pledged during the seven-year period have increased per pledging unit from \$1300/ unit to approximately \$1650/ unit.

While these financial results have been positive through 2007, FPC, like many churches going through pastoral staffing transitions, is facing some financial challenges in the budget for 2008. To quantify these challenges, pledging units are down to 788 or a decline of 11% comparing 2008 to 2007. These reductions have translated into a projected operating loss for 2008 in excess of 100 thousand dollars after making significant reductions in the spending budget.

Given the positive history of FPC, it would be the hope that these negative results will be reversed once the congregation feels a sense of confidence in the direction of the church going forward with a plan to fill the voids in the pastoral staff.

## Our Community

Defining “our community” was a challenge for the Task Force. Although we are a church with an Allentown address, we draw our membership from a vast geographical expanse that includes Allentown, Lehigh County and the surrounding Lehigh Valley area in Eastern PA. For purposes of this study, data for Allentown and Lehigh County was reviewed. Our community is made up of urban areas, older suburban neighborhoods, and newly developed neighborhoods on what had previously been farmland. The community we serve has transitioned from industry based (garment factories and Bethlehem Steel) to service based (with Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network as the area’s largest employer). Also, with the multitude of newly developed neighborhoods, there are many families who commute to their places of employment, often to Philadelphia, New York City, or areas in New Jersey. According to 2005 estimates, white collar employees outnumber blue collar employees 59,098 to 37,932 in our area.

Allentown serves as the county seat of Lehigh County, PA. With a 2006 census population estimate of 113,127, Allentown ranks as Pennsylvania’s third largest city. The Lehigh Valley, comprised of Lehigh and Northampton Counties, is the third largest urbanized area in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with an estimated population of 626,850 (2006). Only the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas have more residents. Allentown is conveniently located within a 300 mile radius of larger metropolitan areas of the eastern seaboard.

In the Lehigh Valley, population growth has been affected by migration of people moving into the area and more births than deaths. Over the past several years, Lehigh and Northampton

Counties have experienced a large migration of people into the area. Migration accounted for more than half of Lehigh County's total population growth of 20,960 during the last decade.

Lehigh County, with a 2006 U.S. Census population estimate of 335,544, is home to people of many different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Anglos represent 90.2% of the population, Hispanic/Latinos represent 14.4%, African-Americans/Blacks 5.4%, Asian 2.9% and Native American/American Indian 0.2% (U.S. Census 2006 estimates). We noted that the percentages equal more than 100% but we were unable to find more accurate information or an explanation of the discrepancy. In the Allentown School District, 40% of the students are Latino. While exact numbers are not known at this time, it is believed that the Lehigh Valley is home to the third largest Arabic community in the United States, behind only the Detroit/Dearborn, MI area and Los Angeles, CA. Lehigh Valley's community is primarily of Syrian and Lebanese descent.

The median household income for Lehigh County is \$53,442. The median value of an owner occupied home is \$113,600 (2000). The HUD-defined Fair Market Rent (2006) for a two bedroom apartment is \$791. This would require \$15.21 per hour household hourly wage rate to be "affordable" (30% of income). The poverty rate in Lehigh County in 2005 was 8.5%; in Allentown, it was 20.6%. If you remove Allentown from the county, the county's rate is 2.6%.

Women account for 51.4% of the population in Lehigh County. High school graduates account for 81.1% of the population. In Lehigh County, 23.3% of the people 25 years of age or older have a bachelor's degree or higher level of education.

Persons under 5 years of age account for 6.2%, under 18 years of age account for 23.2%, 55.6 % are between the ages of 18 and 64, and persons 65 years of age and older account for 15% of the area's population (2006 estimate).

It is estimated that 35.2% of our area is strongly involved with their faith and that 20.7% of households increased their involvement with their faith in the last 10 years (2005). In our community, those of Presbyterian/Reformed faith account for 6.8% (which is more than 1.1 times the U.S. average). Other key faith preferences in our area include Catholic 34.0%, Methodist 10.9%, Baptist 8.6%, Lutheran 7.3%, Judaism 4.6 %, Episcopal 3.5%, Jehovah's Witness 1.2 %, and Orthodox 0.8%. Those interested in faith who have not expressed a religious preference account for 3.7% and 14.1% are likely to have changed their religious preference in the last 10 years.

We have highlighted significant pieces of data about our community; much more could be compiled and offered in this report. The Task Force found this information useful to its discernment process.

#### A Brief Overview of Local Churches and Social Agencies

The Lehigh Valley has a large number of churches to meet the vast religious background of the people who live and worship in this region of Pennsylvania. The mainstream Christian churches are very well represented along with Islamic mosques and Jewish synagogues. With a sharp increase in the Hispanic population, there have been a number of "store front" churches that have sprung up in the cities. These churches are small and are meeting the religious needs of many people in the Hispanic community.

The Diocese of Allentown comprises the counties of Lehigh, Northampton, Berks, Carbon and Schuylkill. The Diocese has a total of 151 parishes along with schools ranging from pre-school through high school.

First Presbyterian works with and supports many community organizations through its mission giving and deacons' community ministries. The partnership of the church with two of these organizations provides an important link to the community.

The Lehigh County Conference of Churches, one of First Presbyterian's community partners, brings the faith community together for problem-solving and service. This organization is comprised of over 140 churches and faith-based organizations working together with over 800 volunteers to meet the human and spiritual needs of our community. Since 1954, the Lehigh County Conference of Churches has sponsored programs that have made a difference in the lives of thousands of people - giving them hope, restoring their dignity and playing a crucial role in each person's life.

Annually, the Lehigh County Conference of Churches:

- serves over 50,000 meals for persons in need including 1,500 children
- links 7,000 people in crisis to community resources
- provides safe, supportive programs for over 500 people struggling with mental health
- finds shelter for 2,200 persons facing homelessness
- assists 425 persons with pharmaceutical needs including 60 children
- prevents homelessness for over 70 persons
- promotes ecumenical endeavors
- keeps over 100 people from freezing in cold weather
- supplies ministry opportunities for over 800 volunteers

The Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV) is another agency that not only has many programs for the less fortunate but, also, is a strong advocate for those who need a person in their corner.

“The mission of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley is to improve the quality of life by building a community in which all people have access to economic opportunity, the ability to pursue that opportunity, and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.”

Some of the programs that CACLV supports are:

- Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown
- Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem
  - Help with starting businesses
- Community Action Financial Services
  - Homeownership Counseling Services
  - Right Stuff about Renting
  - Family Savings Account
  - Free Tax Preparation
  - Homeowners Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP)
  - Mortgage Foreclosure Counseling
- Energy Assistance Programs
  - Residential weatherization
  - Ontrack Program (PPL)
- Fowler Community Technology Center

- Computer classes for children
- The Rising Tide Community Loan Fund
  - Loans for small businesses
- Safe Harbor Easton
  - Shelter for homeless individuals, both men and women
- Second Harvest Food Bank of the Lehigh Valley
  - Distribution of food to emergency food pantries and soup kitchens (6 counties)
- Sixth Street Shelter/Turner Street Apartments/Ferry Street Apartments
  - Short term housing for families with children
  - Long term transitional housing for families and children
- West Ward Neighborhood Partnership
  - Neighborhood revitalization program in Easton
- Work Ready Program
  - Job readiness and employment counseling

The Lehigh Valley is also blessed with a wide array of other social agencies that attempt to meet the needs of a needy community. The Catholic Social Agency provides an important ministry to recent immigrants that has been of invaluable help in our ministries of resettlement. There are a number of food pantries, agencies for planning parenthood, spousal abuse shelters, and mental health agencies, drug and alcohol treatment facilities among others.

There are many social agencies within the Lehigh Valley because there are many in need. With the changing economy, it can be expected that even more of the population will be using these agencies. As the church reaches out to those in need, it is our hope that they will also use the church to fill their spiritual needs as well.

## Appendix

The following pages include data about our membership as it has been recorded. In addition, we are providing some comments gleaned from the US Congregation Life Survey.

First Presbyterian Church of Allentown Today  
Part 1: A Quantitative Look at Our Congregation

Data from Church Record	2007	2006	2005
<b>Active Members</b>	<b>2618</b>	<b>2619</b>	<b>2611</b>
<b>Distribution of Active Members</b>			
25 & under	358 (13.7%)	358	356
26-45	618 (23.6%)	618	616
46-55	487 (18.6%)	487	486
56-65	447 (17.1%)	447	446
Over 65	708 (27.0%)	709	707
Inactive Members	1094	1082	1073
<b>Total Adherents</b>	<b>4946</b>	<b>4935</b>	<b>4903</b>
<b>Average Attendance</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>818</b>
Baptisms (child/adult)	15/2	20/3	24/5
<b>Christian Education - Total</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>927</b>
Age 4 and under	46	51	61
K through 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	192	176	175
7 <sup>th</sup> through 12 <sup>th</sup>	164	147	144
Young Adults	25	26	12
Over 25 years in age	335	328	335
Teachers	210	210	200
<b>People with Disabilities</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Racial Ethnic Breakdown</b>			
Asian	28	26	23
Black	8	8	6
Hispanic	4	4	4
Native American	1	1	1
White	2439	2442	2439
Other	138	138	138

533 of over 2000 church members completed the US Congregational Life Survey June 2007; a limited demographic profile of these respondents includes the following information:

- 62% female, 38% male
- 70% married
- 33% children at home
- Education of respondents:
  - 69% college or advanced education degree (almost double national average)
  - 11% some college
  - 20% High School or less (half the national average)

Part 2: A Qualitative Profile of First Presbyterian Church of Allentown

The commentary below was gleaned from the US Congregational Life Survey June 2007.

**We are...** people who value private time in devotion and prayer... but are people who feel they have not grown as much in our spiritual lives as maybe we should or would want to.

**We feel...** that our activities associated with this congregation (worship and other) help us with everyday living, but that our spiritual needs are not being met as much as we hoped.

**We long...**for enhanced worship. There is a lower than expected sense of joy, God's presence, and inspiration from our worship, but we are not more bored or frustrated than the average church attendee across the nation. In general, we would not invite a friend to come to worship. Responses from surveys suggest that we think that good sermons, fellowship, Bible Studies, and prayer will help us grow spiritually.

**We are interested in learning...** more about life transitions, Christian friendship, retirement, and death. We are least interested in learning about divorce, child abuse, disabilities, and suicide.

**We love...**singing our traditional hymns (over 80%) but there is a growing sense (over 50%) that more modern forms of music need to be introduced as well.

**We are present...** in the life of the church. Over 50% of those who responded to the survey are in leadership roles, and over 56% are involved in church school, Bible Studies, and social groups, all well above the national average. A large percentage of us, 66%, have close friends at this church. Despite all this, we feel that our sense of belonging is strong but declining. There were a number of responses requesting additional opportunities for fellowship of different groups such as Young Adult and College age, Empty Nesters, and Bible studies. Many requested formation of more small groups yet we feel most connected in large group format events.

**We give...** more than compared to most other churches and the size of individual pledges has increased over the last few years but we are a congregation that does not believe in tithing.

**We reach out solo...** in service. Yet over 50% of us (well above national average) are involved in community service, social service or advocacy groups.

**We are long-timers...** in our church membership. Over 60% of us are long-time members with over 10 years at this church. Surprisingly, the remaining 40% are with us less than 5 years.

**We are suburban gas guzzlers...** who live a distance away from the church rather than live close by in the Allentown community. Apparently, our members that come to services and activities really like this church as it takes more than 50% of our congregation 11-20 minutes to get to church.

**We love our music, newsletter, and our Youth programs...** and want to keep them. Aspects of our congregational life that are most valued include traditional worship or music, sermons or preaching, our ministry for youth, and fellowship opportunities. We are also very satisfied with our newsletter, Tidings, and are happy with our Children's Ministry programs. Aspects least valued from the choices listed include: congregation's preschool, prayer ministry, and reaching the un-churched. We are not satisfied with stewardship, the web site (pre-revamping), home visitation, and session.

Mission Study Task Force Report  
Submitted by the Members of the Mission Study Task Force  
June 25, 2008

Members of the Task Force

Jami Cooper  
Larry Deal  
Rick Ensley  
Jon Lentz  
Mike Loomis  
Sam Moussa  
Janet Ney, Chair  
Laura Riker  
Jen Staib  
Marijo Taylor  
Bill Townsend  
Kelsey White

Kathleen Jamhoury, Staff Advisor

**Actions by Session**  
**Based on the Recommendations of the Mission Study Task Force**  
**October 22, 2008**

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NOTE: Following a Mission Study, it is the responsibility of the Session to review each recommendation and determine the action to be taken. The recommendations from the Mission Study are listed again below, this time with the action by Session shown in **bold**. The key to those actions is as follows:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Priority (for “Embrace” items only)</b>	<b>By Whom</b>
<i>Embrace:</i> Undertake immediately	<i>ST:</i> Short term (1-2 years)	<i>H:</i> High	Committee/Board to whom responsibility is assigned
<i>Explore:</i> More information needed	<i>LT:</i> Long term (3-5 years)	<i>M:</i> Medium	
<i>Reject:</i> Not approved		<i>L:</i> Low	

***Pastoral Staffing***

1. *The Session recommends a leader who will have the gift of inspiring excitement and joy in our worship and congregational life and a passion for mission that will engage the hearts, minds, and hands of the congregation. (Embrace – ST – H – Staff Committee)*
2. *The Session recommends a new pastor who can be a facilitator who inspires the best in both staff and laity. He or she will encourage the other members of the staff to explore their ministries allowing them to preach, teach, and lead as they are called. (Embrace – ST – H – Staff Committee)*
3. *The Session recommends that we define pastoral functions and determine how the current pastoral staff along w/ new pastoral staff will fulfill these duties. (Embrace – ST – H – Staff Committee)*
4. *The Session recommends that we provide administrative support for each pastor. (Explore – LT – Staff Committee)*
5. *The Session recommends lay persons provide greater assistance in the day-to-day tasks of the congregation. (Embrace – ST – L – Staff Committee)*
6. *The Session recommends an examination of the roles of existing pastoral staff for adjustments that fulfill identified staff function areas. (Embrace – ST – H – Staff Committee)*
7. *The Session recommends that pastoral staff job descriptions be updated and make compensation consistent with job descriptions. (Embrace – ST – H – Staff Committee)*

***Programs***

Mission:

8. *The Session recommends pastoral and lay leadership focused on spiritual formation to support the work needed to achieve this transformation. (Embrace – LT – H – Session)*

9. *The Session recommends that we seek new ways to reach out to other populations in the surrounding community. (Embrace – LT – M – Mission Committee)*

Fellowship:

10. *The Session recommends more activities such as church fairs, potluck suppers, picnics, small groups coming together for fun, study, or mission, and other forms of fellowship. (Embrace – ST – L – Deacons)*

Education:

*Children*

11. *The Session recommends that the Christian Education curriculum for children in the upper elementary grades be revised to provide an interactive, multi-age level experience. Many less traditional curricula are available and should be explored. (Explore – ST – Christian Education)*
12. *The Session recommends an examination of Youth Club, as well as other programs for children and youth, with a view to determining the best use of volunteers' time. (Explore – LT – Christian Education)*

*Youth*

13. *The Session recommends that the Christian Education curriculum for youth continue to be updated and expanded. (Embrace – ST – L – Christian Education)*
14. *The Session recommends that in considering the entire staffing plan that more time be allotted to Youth Ministry by the both Pastoral and non-ordained staff. (Explore – LT – Staff Committee)*

*Young Adults.*

15. *The Session recommends an eager pursuit of ministry to young adults. (Embrace – LT – H - Session)*

*Adults*

16. *The Session recommends offering fewer classes each Sunday, freeing space for a burgeoning youth program. (Reject)*
17. *The Session recommends offering a coffee hour for fellowship, casual conversation, and building relationships. (Embrace – ST – M – Membership Committee)*
18. *The Session recommends engaging more outside speakers. (Explore – ST – Christian Education)*

Worship:

19. *The Session recommends that all of the pastoral staff be given regular opportunities to preach and that they be encouraged to explore their preaching vocation, strengthening their abilities and finding the prophetic voice that will uplift and inspire. (Embrace – ST – H – Staff Committee)*

20. *The Session recommends a contemporary service be added to the worship service schedule, perhaps after the Sunday morning services or on Saturday evenings. (Explore – LT – Worship Committee)*

Stewardship:

21. *The Session recommends that accurate membership rolls be maintained and assuring that the membership rolls are adjusted yearly, with no exceptions, and that they are reported accurately. (Embrace – ST – M – Membership Committee)*

Pastoral Care:

22. *The Session recommends careful consideration and preparation to meet the needs of a growing number of older adults. (Explore – LT – Staff Committee)*

Other Ministries:

23. *The Session recommends keeping and expanding the Arabic ministry. (Explore – ST – Mission Committee)*
24. *The Session recommends expansion of our relationships with churches and ministries in other countries to include visits and other exchanges. (Explore – LT – Mission Committee)*

Lay Leadership:

25. *The Session recommends developing, and using, a working, effective time and talent database. (Embrace – ST – L – Stewardship Committee)*
26. *The Session recommends charging all committees to examine their practices, procedures, and programs to determine their effectiveness in fulfilling the vision and mission of the church. (Embrace – ST – M – Session)*
27. *The Session recommends that classes be provided that teach effective meeting management and leadership skills to members of boards, committee chairs, and other lay leaders of all ages. (Embrace – LT – M – Session)*
28. *The Session recommends that laypersons take a greater role in leading the work of the church. (Embrace – ST – L – Staff Committee)*

Operations/Physical Assets:

29. *The Session recommends planning now for a capital campaign to expand the CE wing to accommodate expanding church programs. (Explore – LT – Stewardship Committee)*
30. *The Session recommends replacing/fixing the Fellowship Hall sound systems. (Explore – ST – Trustees)*