

MISSION STUDY

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN PLEASANTVILLE

NOVEMBER 2010

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I. INTRODUCTION

We are the Presbyterian Church in Pleasantville. We are currently engaged in a transformation process as a result of an extensive project which involved every member of our congregation over a span of more than a year. The results of that effort are set forth in detail in the Report of our Transformation Commission which is annexed hereto. As we address issues in this mission study we will draw substantially from parts of that Report. The primary concern of our church at this time is focused on implementation of recommendations contained in the Report.

II. WHO ARE WE AS A CONGREGATION AND WHAT DO WE FEEL CALLED TO DO IN THE NEXT PHASE OF OUR MINISTRY?

A. Our History

On Thursday, November 2, 1865 a Presbyterian Church chapel was dedicated in Somers Point. The building was described as “not large but...neat in plan, and...one of the best finished, both inside and out, in the county.” Thus began the history of what is today known as the Presbyterian Church in Pleasantville.

Worship was conducted in the chapel until 1886 when a decision was made to move both the congregation and the chapel to Pleasantville. The building was then carefully and painstakingly moved up Shore Road to its new location at the corner of Washington and Madison Avenues in the growing city of Pleasantville.

By 1901 the congregation had outgrown the small chapel and so it was moved again, this time to the back of the church property, to be used for a Sunday school and for recreational purposes. A new and larger church structure was built on the corner site where the chapel had been located.

The church would remain at the Washington Ave. location for the next 60 years. The congregation grew along with the City of Pleasantville. As the years

passed, however, the needs of the congregation began to outgrow the capabilities of the church building. In the 1960's land was donated for the construction of a new church facility at the corner of Tilton Road and Shore Road (Main Street) in Pleasantville near the border with Northfield.

On October 4, 1962 ground was broken for a Christian education building at the new location and by Christmas of 1963 the congregation had moved from Washington Ave. to worship in the new building. In the fall of 1966 ground was broken for a new sanctuary building and by Christmas of 1967 the congregation was worshipping in the sanctuary where we continue to worship today.

Over the past 143 years the congregation has met regularly for worship, under different circumstances and at different locations. The one great constant through the years had been the celebration of God's presence in our lives and the quest to understand the love of Jesus Christ and what it means to serve God and neighbor.

B. Our Demographics

The church has a total of 181 persons affiliated with it in one way or another. Of that total 138 persons are active members. The total number of children participating in Christian education programs from kindergarten through 12th grade is reported as 21 although it is rare that 21 youth are present together at any one time. The average weekly attendance at worship is 77, which includes children attending Sunday school.

The congregation is predominately comprised of older persons, many of whom are long-term members. In a study conducted at the end of 2001 (Percept Study) 78% of respondents indicated that they had been members for over 20 years. At present, 29% of the congregation is over the age of 65 and approximately 48% is over the age of 55. Approximately 38% of the membership lies within the age range from 26 to 55, and only 15% of the members are younger than 25 years of age. The age of the congregation is also reflected in the composition of various subgroups within the church. By way of example, the average age of members of the Sarah-Lydia circle is well in excess of 70 and the average age of the choir is in the mid sixties.

The congregation, like the Presbyterian Church nationally, is neither racially nor ethnically diverse. A total of 126 active members are white. There are 9 African Americans, 3 Asians and 0 Hispanics. Although Pleasantville is a community with a population composed mostly of ethnic and racial minorities, the church attracts only 4% of its membership from Pleasantville.

The Percept Study also indicated that the economic status of most members placed them well within the middle class. In 2001 the average annual family income was \$75,739, which was about 20% higher than that of families in the general population for the study area. At the same time 75% of all member families had an income below \$100,000 and less than 10% of families reported an annual household income above \$150,000. There are relatively few members at both the high and low ends of the economic spectrum. This fact is reflected in the occupational responsibilities of members. Only 15% of the members held executive or managerial positions that typically yield more income. However, 2/3rds of all members were employed in some form of professional specialty. (This contrasted sharply with the figure of 12% for the general population in the study area.) Consistent with this finding was the fact that a total of 63% of church members held a bachelor's and/or post-graduate degree compared to 19% of the general population.

For many years the church has functioned as a regional church, drawing most of its members from outside of Pleasantville. At present only 4% of church members reside in Pleasantville. Approximately 70% of the congregation travels more than 5 miles to come to church. The largest percentage of members (25%) come from Egg Harbor Twp. They are followed by 16% from Northfield and from between 9% to 11% each from Linwood, Absecon, Hamilton Twp. and Galloway Twp. Additional members, in smaller numbers, come from places as diverse as Absecon Island, Somers Point, Upper Twp., Egg Harbor City, and Milmay.

In summary, the congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Pleasantville is predominantly white and middle class. The members are relatively well educated and come from throughout the Atlantic County area but for the most part not from Pleasantville. The congregation is aging and does not reflect substantial diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, or economic status.

C. Our Values

As part of the study process members of the congregation were asked to participate in a series of small group discussions. The meetings were organized to elicit members' feelings and concerns about the church. As part of those discussions, members were asked to identify what was most important to them about this church.

The responses focused heavily on one value above others. Approximately 75% of the respondents indicated that what they valued most was the sense of community, characterized by the acceptance and caring for one another that they found within the church. That feeling was expressed in a variety of ways. One person called it "the sense of family, togetherness, acceptance." Another said, "It's a Christian family that accepts me. I feel that I belong." Yet another referred to "the nurturing and affirming home it has been for my family and children." And one person stating what was most important to him about this church put it most succinctly but powerfully when he said in the simplest of terms, "I was accepted."

The idea of acceptance manifested itself in another way as well. Approximately 20% of the respondents specifically identified a progressive attitude toward faith questions and an unwillingness to impose ones beliefs on others as what they valued most about this church. That finding is consistent with data from the Percept Study that indicated that over 40% of congregation members were raised in a denomination or tradition other than Presbyterian.

There were other responses as well. Approximately 40% of respondents identified the experience of worship as being of most importance to them with about three quarters of that group specifically mentioning the music. Approximately 20% of the respondents specifically mentioned the minister as what they most valued about the church. In addition it is interesting to note that, although caring for one another was highly valued, only 11% of respondents identified mission/outreach, or caring for those outside the church, as what they valued most about this church. Other matters mentioned to a lesser extent included: a sense of family tradition; a place for children to grow; and the opportunity to participate in adult education.

From the responses of the congregation it is clear that what is most important for most members of the congregation is the sense of community characterized by the acceptance and care for each other which they have experienced from belonging to this church.

D. Our Concerns

As part of the “listening group” sessions, members were also asked to identify what they worried about most when they thought about the future of the church. One response overwhelmed all the others. Approximately 90% of the respondents were concerned about the future viability of the church and its programs due to declining membership through aging and the failure to attract sufficient numbers of new, and particularly, younger members.

Members expressed this concern in various ways. One member said, “I worry that we may eventually go under unless we get more young people to carry on.” Other members asked, “Will there be a church in ten years?” and “Will it be here for my Sunday school class when they are adults?” And yet another member, in very pragmatic terms asked, “In ten years will we still be able to pay all our bills and have enough members to continue?”

The subjective concerns of members of the congregation are justified by the objective data. Current data in a number of critical measurement areas was compared to data for the same areas for the year 1994. In all areas examined the condition of the church had declined over that time span. From 1994 to the present, the church has substantially declined in the number of adherents, active members, worship attendance, and church school participation. At the same time the average age of members has risen substantially. Despite the loss of membership the average amount of each personal gift has increased, along with the total amount of money raised through giving. Nevertheless, that amount has substantially fallen behind the rate of inflation. The concern that the Church faces an impending crisis to its viability is very real and dominates all other concerns.

E. Our Future

Any effort to preserve and grow our church necessarily raises questions about the nature of what we wish to achieve. “How big do we want the church to be?” “What would be the character of the church we want to become?” “What would the demographic make up of a future congregation look like? Would we be able to grow and still preserve values that are important to us?”

If we are to engage in an effort to preserve and grow our church we must have a vision of what we want our future to look like. In our effort to shape that vision we have drawn heavily on the responses received in our listening group sessions.

The one characteristic of our church that members valued above all others was the sense of community and acceptance that they found within the church. The Commission believes that any vision of our future must preserve that characteristic. We want to be a church where everyone is accepted and can feel at home. Maintaining that sense of community, and the interpersonal relationships that are part of it, is a critical factor in determining how large we want our future church to be.

Church sociologist Arlin Rothauge has developed a framework to describe the characteristics inherent in different church sizes. His framework organizes churches into four categories based on size. The first category of church has up to 50 adults and children at worship and is denominated as a “family size” church. A church in that category is usually dominated by one or two influential families with the pastor playing a passive or part time role. Clearly, that description does not currently relate to our church, nor is it our desire to be that type of church in the future.

The second category of church is labeled “pastoral size” and has from 50 to 150 members at worship. The congregation is typically led by a coalition of two or three friendship or family networks unified around the person and role of the pastor. The roles in this type of church have been described as follows:

Clergy time is largely taken up maintaining a direct pastoral relationship with each member, coordinating the work of a small leadership circle, personally conducting worship, and leading small-group programs such as Bible study. The governing board operates like a committee arranging much of the day-to-day life of the congregation.

Members recognize each other's faces, know most people's names, and will notice if someone new is present at worship.

The third category of church size is labeled as "program size" and has from 150 to 350 members at worship. This type of church is described as follows:

This congregation is known for the quality and variety of its programs. Separate programs for children, youth, couples, seniors and other age and interest groups provide entry points for a wide range of people. The pastor's crucial role is to recruit, equip, and inspire a small circle of key program leaders—lay and ordained, paid and unpaid. This ring of leadership might include, for example, the choir director, the church-school superintendent, the youth-group leader, the coordinator of lay visitors, and the head of a committee that tracks new-member incorporation. Working as a team with the pastor, they reach out to involve others as program participants and as leaders. Decision-making is broadly distributed within the wider leadership circle (25 to 50 people) and pastoral care is shared by laity.

The final category is referred to as the "corporate size" church and has a weekly attendance at worship from 400 to 1000 members. This type of church is describes as follows:

This congregation is known for excellence in worship and music, and for the range and diversity of its programs. Specialized ministries are provided for narrowly identified groups of people; several of these programs may be known beyond the congregation for their excellence. Often, distinct subcongregations form around multiple worship services. The senior pastor spends more time preparing to preach and lead worship than most clergy, and must be skilled at working with a diverse staff of full-time professional leaders. Decision making is carried out by a multilayered structure of staff boards, and committees. While clergy continue to provide pastoral care, especially in crisis moments, most members find their spiritual support in small groups of from lay visitors.

Using these categories, our church presently could best be described as a "pastor size" church. We have an average weekly worship attendance of 77, including children. That level of attendance places us well within the 50 to 150 attendance range that characterizes a "pastor size" church. In fact, our average weekly attendance could be just about doubled while still maintaining the basic characteristics of a "pastor-size" church as

described by Rothauge. At double our current worship attendance we might begin to approach some of the characteristics of a “program-size” church but could still maintain the sense of community inherent in a “pastor-size” church. Because of our strong desire to maintain the sense of community that is so important for our members, we envision a church that would still retain the qualities of a “pastor size” church but find itself at the high point of the membership range for that type of church. That goal could be achieved with growth that would yield an average weekly worship attendance of 150 adults and children. In order to sustain an average weekly worship attendance of 150 persons, we would probably need an active membership of approximately 250 to 300 people. Our vision for the future reflects that fact.

Any vision of our future must consider more than the issue of church size. Our listening group sessions also told us that members highly valued our progressive attitude toward faith questions and our acceptance of persons no matter where they might be on their personal faith journey. Our progressive approach respecting the diversity of members’ beliefs on issues of faith has distinguished our church from numerous other churches in the area. Because we have been somewhat known in the area for this characteristic, our congregation comes from a relatively widespread geographical area. We welcome that fact and in our vision of the future want to promote it further.

At present our church membership is heavily skewed toward older members. A clear message from the listening group meetings was the congregation’s desire for greater generational diversity. Any vision of our future must recognize that desire. Our church membership is also heavily skewed from a racial and ethnic standpoint. Over 90% of our members are white. That fact is consistent with membership in the Presbyterian Church USA as well as with most mainline Protestant churches in America. Despite the integration of our society as a whole, the membership of many churches has not followed that pattern. An analysis of the reasons for that fact is not within the mandate of our Commission. However, as we envision our future we recognize that our church family would be enriched by the diversity of views and experiences that would come from a membership that was more reflective of the community around us. For that reason our vision embraces a church that reflects greater diversity than at present.

Finally, our vision must also embrace the vitality of our programming and congregational life within the church. It is not appropriate for a strategic plan to deal with specific programs, because programs naturally evolve and change over time. However, in a broad sense, we want a church that is relevant in today's world with robust programs for mission, both locally and globally, for Christian education to help members of all ages as they confront the moral and ethical choices of daily living, and for building caring relationships among one another within our church family.

To capture these concepts in a concise manner the Commission has crafted the following statement articulating our vision for this church:

We are the Presbyterian Church in Pleasantville. We aspire to be:

- A church where God's presence is celebrated in worship and where members are challenged, inspired and energized by sermon, prayer and music.
- A church of 250 to 300 members that reflects and respects the diversity of God's world around us in age, gender, race and ethnicity.
- A progressive, open-minded and inclusive community that seeks to understand the love of Jesus Christ and what it means to serve God and neighbor.
- A church relevant to today's world with robust programs for:
 - Mission at the local, regional and global levels
 - Christian education for all ages
 - Promoting caring relationships and mutual support among members of our church family
- A church that cares for members and visitors alike, where persons feel at home no matter who they are or where they may be on their journey of faith.

F. Our Next Steps

In order to achieve our vision we have identified three strategic options. The first and preferred option is to relocate and build a new church in Egg Harbor

Township. We do not reach this conclusion lightly since we have been located in Pleasantville for many years.

At present, Pleasantville is a town with 38 churches. Most of those churches serve racial and cultural minorities that, in Pleasantville, represent a large majority of the population. Growing our church by attracting more members from the Pleasantville community would be a good thing. However, realism suggests that such a strategy for growth would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible to achieve. We are a white middle class church in a heavily racial/ethnic community, where there are over 30 other churches serving that racial/ethnic population. We do not see our call as one of trying to draw members away from those churches and we have no significant track record of success in drawing new members from Pleasantville. Currently only 4% of our membership comes from Pleasantville. These facts suggest that the greatest opportunities for future growth will have to come from areas outside Pleasantville.

The option of building a new church facility in Egg Harbor Township has some very attractive features. As noted in our demographic research, Egg Harbor Township offers the greatest potential for church growth. It has a substantial number of young families with children and a racial and cultural mix of population that we would like to emulate. In addition, with the exception of a couple of very small Methodist churches, there are no mainline Protestant churches to serve the needs of this growing population. Because our church is a regional church, drawing members from all parts of Atlantic County, a move could probably be accommodated without suffering substantial trauma in the life of our congregation.

However, implementation of this option would have substantial economic costs. In order to achieve our goal it might be necessary and desirable to partner with another church in a similar position as ours. We are now actively engaged in exploring the viability of achieving the option of relocating.

At the same time we recognize that efforts to revitalize our church cannot wait. Whether we relocate or not, a vibrant and energized congregation is a necessary attribute to attract and keep new members. Our current efforts in that regard will be discussed in a succeeding section of this study.

III. WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY AND HOW DO WE DISCERN OUR CALLING TO MEET THOSE NEEDS?

In order to address needs of our community it is first necessary to understand what is “our community.” We are a church located in Pleasantville but in reality are not of Pleasantville: Over 95% of our members travel from areas outside of Pleasantville to worship and participate in the life of our church. Therefore, our sense of community is not limited to the geographical and political boundaries of Pleasantville. While our sense of community has local dimensions, it also possesses regional and global dimensions as well.

We recognize that what binds us together as a congregation is our desire to be faithful to what Jesus called the two greatest commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind” and...”you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” With this teaching as our common bond we have set out on a deliberate course to engage the time, talents and treasure of our members in meeting the needs of our community as we broadly understand that concept.

In June 2009 the Session approved an initiative called Universal Participation in Mission. The plan called for encouraging every member of our congregation to become involved in improving the life of a neighbor outside of our immediate congregation. A variety of alternative means of service were suggested addressing needs at the local, regional and global levels. Members were encouraged to participate by sharing their time, talent, or treasure or any combination of the three. The initiative was premised on the belief that no one was incapable of acting on God’s commandment that we love our neighbors.

The month of September was spent conducting a drive to secure service commitments from members of the congregation. Each member was encouraged to ask themselves the question, “What can I do to make a difference?” The plan allowed for participation in whatever manner was most suited to each person’s

individual concerns and circumstances. By the end of September we received commitments from a substantial majority of the congregation across all age groups.

The commitments were translated into action almost immediately. In October, 21 members of our church participated in the CROP Walk raising \$785 out of a total of \$9,000 from the area. In November we resumed making PB&J sandwiches for Jean Webster's Kitchen in Atlantic City. During the succeeding year over 3,000 sandwiches have been delivered to the kitchen. Regular deliveries of bag lunches for disadvantaged families in Pleasantville were also provided for delivery in cooperation with Eastern Service Workers in Pleasantville. During the year over 2,000 lunches have been prepared and delivered.

Members also committed to acting as sponsors for children around the world. In November, 9 children and 1 teacher from Uganda were matched with congregation sponsors through the work of Real Partners Uganda, a program started by members of the Community Presbyterian Church in Brigantine. By years end, church members were sponsoring 13 children 2 women and 1 teacher around the world as well as providing other financial support for the Mustard Seed Academy in Uganda.

In December 2009 the church held its largest and most successful Alternative Christmas Gift Fair ever with 18 local service agencies participating and over \$3,100 raised. In March over 100 hygiene kits were prepared and shipped for Haitian relief. Coffee and other fair trade products from the Presbyterian Coffee Project and SERRV were sold on a regular basis throughout the year. In addition members, time, talents or treasure were committed to the following:

- Pennies for Peace
- Women to Women International
- Children's International
- Plan USA
- Contact Atlantic
- American Red Cross
- Atlantic City Rescue Mission
- Sister Jean's Kitchen
- Habitat for Humanity
- Heifer International

Church World Service
Atlantic County Women's Center
And More

In addition to individual commitments, the church also committed \$4,000 to Habitat for Humanity and \$10,000 to Sister Jean's Kitchen in Atlantic City.

Our sense of community is as broad as the concept of "neighbor" explained by Jesus in the parable of the "Good Samaritan." And the needs of our community are as varied as the people in it. We have discerned our calling in the broadest sense as a call to love our neighbors. In a more concrete sense it is a calling to match our talents and capacities to effectively serve, with opportunities where service is needed. While we have undertaken specific mission efforts as church-wide projects, we believe strongly in also encouraging each individual member to make a commitment to love and serve neighbors as part of their lives. This is how we have discerned our calling.

IV. WHAT SPECIFICALLY WILL WE DO TO STRENGTHEN OUR CONGREGATIONAL AND COMMUNITY MINISTRIES IN THE NEXT YEAR?

Any discussion of a strategy to strengthen our congregational and community ministries must begin with the fundamental understanding that we cannot hope for an influx of new members to make us a more vibrant and energized church and therefore accomplish this for us. Rather, our strategy must be based on the reality that a vibrant and energized church is a prerequisite to attracting new members who can then enhance our ministries. Therefore, if we want to grow our church and its programs we must start by building a renewed sense of excitement and enthusiasm for our church among our current members.

To do that requires more than simple cheerleading. To start we need to identify what it is about our church that can realistically merit our enthusiasm. We need to ask questions such as: What are the qualities that define our identity? What

do we have to offer that makes us special as a church? What are the qualities that differentiate us from other churches? What qualities do we want people to think of when they hear our name? What qualities about us might make others want to join us?

In seeking to answer these questions we have identified three qualities that we believe represent what is special about our church and that can serve as a basis, both for building a greater sense of enthusiasm and commitment among our members, and for attracting new members. Those qualities are embodied in the concepts of being progressive, relevant, and caring. We will discuss each of these in turn.

Progressive

We are a church that sees ourselves as being progressive. We pride ourselves on being a theologically and socially open community, inviting and accepting all persons no matter who they are or where they may be on their journey of faith. Our membership comes from a broad range of Christian backgrounds and traditions.

What binds us together as a community is our desire to be faithful to what Jesus called the two greatest commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” and...”You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

We are a church that does not bind itself by the strictures of religious doctrine. Rather, we are a community that is open and critical in its approach to thinking about issues of faith. We are not a church that is “conservative” as that term is commonly used. Neither, however would we seek to be labeled as “liberal” since both terms can often represent doctrinaire approaches to issues of faith. Our intention has been to create a community beyond such labels where people from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs can feel comfortable thinking together about faith and life and asking hard questions of each other and of God.

Relevant

Relevant means that we are addressing matters that are important and that concern people on a personal, familial, community, and global level. It means that people see what we are doing, and what we invite them to join in doing, as

worthwhile and capable of making a difference in people's lives. It means that we are a church of action and not just words. To effectively brand our church as relevant means that we must do more than merely rationalize our current efforts as sufficient. We must embrace the concept with enthusiasm and passion in such a way as to stand out for our efforts.

An understanding of relevance requires that we begin with an understanding of the matters that concern people in their daily lives. On a personal or family level that might involve issues such as economic security, interfamily relations, child rearing, aging, health concerns, handling stress, realizing self-esteem and personal fulfillment, or shaping personal values. On a community or global level people's concerns might relate to matters such as the economy and the impact of globalization, risks from degradation of the environment and environmental change, threats to our security and to the life and safety of people around the world, how to live with a sense of unity in an increasingly diverse world, and the effects of poverty in terms of hunger, homelessness, poor health, lack of opportunity and hopelessness.

Understanding the importance of these concerns, we as a church need to ask ourselves how we can meaningfully and tangibly relate to these issues. We need to ask how we can help our members deal with the moral and ethical choices inherent in these issues. And we need to ask how we can draw upon the skills and talents of our members to act in areas where we can make a difference in peoples lives.

Caring

When we describe ourselves as caring we mean that people in our midst find a sense of acceptance and feeling at home. We are an extended family with shared concerns, interests and a common faith, even if the details of that faith differ in nuance. The support and caring for each other is one of the things that our members value most about this church.

In order to re-energize our church we want to celebrate and build on these three aspects of our identity that distinguish us. We want to regenerate a sense of enthusiasm and commitment among our members. And we want to communicate that sense of energy to the larger community.

Towards those ends we created our Universal Participation in Mission Program. As we now begin our second year we have increased the level of commitment by our members. We have more members participating and more members committing to multiple service opportunities. Our theme for the year is “Making a Difference – Sharing the Joy.” We believe that we are making a tangible difference in the lives of our neighbors both locally and around the world. At the same time, however, perhaps the greatest beneficiary of our effort has been our church. The initiative has given us a sense of direction and a renewed sense of common purpose that can carry us through a challenging period and reinforce our identity as progressive, relevant and caring.

V. WHAT MUST OUR PASTOR AND LAY LEADERS DO TO HELP US STRENGTHEN OUR CONGREGATION AND OUR COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN THE NEXT PHASE OF OUR MINISTRY?

The response to this question is simple and straightforward. There are two priorities. First, we must focus on resolving the issue of whether a relocation of our church is feasible. Second, we must focus on efforts to reinforce our identity as progressive, relevant and caring.

VI. WHAT KINDS OF SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS DO WE NEED IN OUR PASTOR?

We are looking for a pastor with the ability to effectively lead and inspire others. To do this he or she must possess the capacity for visionary thinking, be able to embrace our vision, and have demonstrated the skills to translate a vision into reality. The pastor must possess a clear sense of purpose, grounded in the teachings of Jesus, and be able to relate that purpose to ethical choices confronting the church and its individual members. We are looking for a leader with organizational skills, who is result oriented and comfortable with accountability. This means that our pastor must be able to set realistic goals for the church and for congregational programs and activities. It also means that he or she must be able to identify,

develop and mobilize the skills of church members in working to achieve those goals. And it means that the pastor must be willing to hold him or herself, as well as congregational leaders, accountable for achieving results.

We are looking for a pastor who is comfortable with change. In today's dynamic world we are reminded of the words of Charles Darwin. "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, not the most intelligent, but the one most receptive to change." Our church is in a period of transformation. We need a pastor who is creative, who understands the dynamics of change and who can shepherd our congregation through the transformation process.

We also want a pastor with strong interpersonal skills. The pastor should be a good communicator, able to listen with understanding and to hear others as well to clearly express his or her views. We want a pastor who can be honest with us, being empathetic when appropriate and constructively critical when necessary.