

Appendix K - Summaries of Survey Responses

Participants: 103 people responded to the survey:

- 23 have been members for 41 to 75 years
- 19 have been members for 25 to 40 years
- 19 have been members for 11 to 20 years
- 15 have been members for 6 to 10 years
- 9 have been members for 5 years or less
- 8 are New Members who joined in the past year
- 1 is an Inactive Member who no longer lives in the area
- 9 have been regular visitors for 1 to 5 years

*I. **Strengths:** The strengths identified here came from Survey Questions 3, 4 and 5. They include (a) positive attributes described in response to how FHC's ministry and mission influenced participant's lives and choices, and (b) descriptions of the role church plays in their lives **if** they said FHC filled that role for them.*

a. Relational

Forest Hill Church is a **community** that is:

- loving,
- accepting,
- supportive,
- friendly.
- engaging,
- welcoming,
- spiritual,
- tolerant
- faith-filled,
- with good role models and
- people with similar or shared values

Our church is a **family** in the best sense of the word and the **center** of many people's lives. It offers:

- fellowship opportunities,
- social groups,
- fun special events,
- friendships, relationships, and
- social and spiritual education

It is a **place** to belong, a moral anchor--where people know each other and are known--that instills a sense of connection and belonging.

b. Worshipful

We enjoy **worshipping** in a safe and welcoming space and **experiencing**

- **music** that is uplifting/inspirational -- especially the AWE services and other special music programs and offerings;
- **liturgy** that is:
 - generous,
 - lively, and
 - Spirit-filled; with
- **sermons** by pastors and lay leaders that are:
 - enlightened,
 - challenging,
 - inclusive,
 - inspiring and inspired,
 - lectionary-based,
 - challenging,
 - intellectually stimulating, and
 - thought-provoking.

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c. Educational

We value **Youth & Children's education** (especially Pathways) that

- instills values, models faith, and provides growth opportunities,
- provides teaching opportunities for adults and
- community involvement for youth.

We value **Adult education** (especially small groups and Bible studies) that is

- spiritually educating,
- facilitates faith development and reclamation,
- provides spiritual nourishment and guidance,
- is well-organized, and
- gives people a chance to contribute, lead, and live out their faith.

d. Missional

We value **mission and outreach initiatives**, especially those that:

- engage the world and our broader community,
- teach/demonstrate justice,
- model a high level of social conscience and consciousness,
- emphasize social responsibility,
- show a commitment to social justice, and
- demonstrate community leadership around social issues and in a social framework.

We value **opportunities to serve**, such as:

- our food pantry,
- involvement in IHN (Family Promise) and other housing initiatives,
- partnering with Boulevard School,
- hosting political debates,
- green/sustainable stewardship initiatives,
- interfaith activities, and
- supporting those in need.

It's important to us to be **part of a church** that is:

- involved/aware of the importance of mission, and
- supports and encourages mission participation.

e. Well-Led

We want, and appreciate, **staff members**, especially our pastoral staff of John and Clover, and Anne who are:

- emotionally supportive,
- encouraging,

- renewing,
- supportive of families, and a
- source of energy and hope

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2. **Non-monetary giving motivators:** Answers to Survey Question 6 “What motivates you to give non-monetary resources (energy, time, talents, skills) to FHC?”

We serve when we recognize/understand the need, and the task is:

- meaningful
- worthwhile
- has a purpose
- advances FHC’s mission
- something they love to do
- interesting to them
- fits their gifts
- uses their abilities, talents and skills
- fits time schedule and
- fits physical abilities and health

Serving allows us to:

- contribute
- share knowledge
- make a difference
- learn and grow
- get more than we give
- bolster our self-confidence

We say “yes” because:

- someone asks us to serve,
- we love working with others, and
- we like the other people helping.

We serve out of a desire:

- to do good works
- to help
- to serve as Christ’s hands and feet in the world

- to return what we’ve received

Some of us serve because we think

- it’s our duty and obligation,
- we should do our fair share
- we must give back, and
- it’s the right thing to do

Most of us enjoy serving because it:

- is a way to be part of the community,
- increases sense of belonging,
- provides fellowship and enjoyable social time,
- makes us happier, and
- is just plain fun.

Many serve to

- meet people who become friends
- meet mentors and role models
- be mentors or role models
- for spiritual enrichment
- as a form of worship
- out of devotion to the Loving God
- for a sense of satisfaction and purpose
- to fulfill Christ’s teachings

And some of us serve because it gives us:

- a voice in decision-making
- a sense of accomplishment
- prestige and recognition

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3. *Financial giving motivations: Answers to Survey Question 7 “What motivates you to give financially to FHC?”*

We give

- when we recognize and understand the needs are real and worthwhile,
- because the church needs money and we need the church, and
- because when we’re asked to give, the request is presented as an opportunity to help.

We give because we believe in

- charity,
- sacrifice,
- tithing, and
- the spiritual discipline of giving.

We give in order to

- share God’s blessings,
- be responsible, and
- pay our fair share.

We give from a feeling of:

- abundance,
- privilege,
- duty,
- responsibility, and
- because it’s the right thing to do for the community and God’s plan.

We are comfortable giving because our money

- is well-managed,
- used in a fiscally responsible manner,
- will further our mission, and
- goes where it’s most needed.

We expect our donations to

- compensate our great staff,
- pay for valuable FHC programs, music, worship and education,
- build upon our achievements, and
- serve our own congregation.

We also expect our donations will be used with compassion and deliberation to:

- reach out to the community beyond our walls,
- keep FHC a strong presence in the community,
- help FHC make a difference in the world, and
- keep FHC a strong presence for God in the greater community.

When we give, we give with a sense of:

- abundance,
- personal investment,
- connection to the community,
- gratitude at being able to give, and
- knowing we’re beloved children of God.

For most of us, the amount we give depends on:

- our income and the availability of funds,
- the realities of our financial responsibilities, and
- knowing how our giving compares to overall giving in the congregation.

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4. **Biggest Issues:** Answers to Survey Question 8 “What do you believe are the biggest issues facing the church in the future?”

The vast majority of us listed **two main issues: membership and finances:**

- maintaining a functional, self-supporting congregation despite changes in economy and neighboring sociological make-up
- need to stabilize/grow membership to strengthen finances
- need to attract people who can, and do, give generously
- continue service & spiritual guidance programs while adding members to maintain aging building
- Growing membership, financial needs
- Transition of member base strains financial resources available

Some of us articulated **specific financial issues** as obstacles to overcome:

- discerning needs vs. wants
- transient life styles, economic hardship, lost jobs
- need estate bequests that go toward our operating budget, not just endowment or special needs
- creative stewardship of dwindling resources

Some of us pointed to **mission & outreach** as important reasons for financial stability:

- responding to mission and justice opportunities now more than ever,
- global welfare,
- pay the bills and serve those in need,
- moral issues related to poverty, greed, social values and human prejudices,
- stewardship of the earth, honoring the creation,
- peacemaking,
- addressing poverty,
- social justice for the underprivileged,
- fighting for Social Justice because Jesus came for those who are oppressed and told us to follow him,
- living Jesus’ example,
- being a light to the community,
- honoring the dignity of every human being,
- helping with both hands—not helping with one and hindering with the other.

Others focused on **non-financial reasons for growing membership:**

- to widen our reach and welcome searchers,
- witness for people without faith or a church,
- attract unchurched, especially 20-40 year olds,
- engage a different audience than churches usually attract,

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- attract young people and more diverse folks to pick up the banner,
- keep our young people involved,
- engage the next generation,
- stay relevant to younger generations while remaining grounded in some sort of founding faith traditions,
- attract GLBTQ persons to our community,
- fit into the changing neighborhood,
- stay relevance to today's life styles, being relevant in very changing world.

We also identified specific **reasons for declining church membership:**

- demographics and lifestyle changes with our local population,
- population drift, declining/aging membership,
- people don't go to church today just because everybody does--they have to feel it meets a need they are aware of, especially when they don't feel they "have" to in order to avoid hell,
- apathy, and lack of commitment,
- personal and cultural materialism/narcissism,
- increased agnosticism,
- politics,
- society's pull toward negative forces, including diminished time available to people to get involved,
- unrelenting speed and busyness ,
- struggles of the nearby inner city and aimless youth,
- drifting attention spans in the younger generations,
- temptation to water down the Gospel not to offend the public, to "succeed" at the expense of sound doctrine,
- positioning ourselves as "different " from evangelical when we live in such a formal building,
- developing well-rounded programs not only to evangelize but to engage in mission and connect in community,
- overcoming reluctance to tell our own faith story.

Finally, a few of us focused on **long-term planning** to:

- Find quality replacements for John, Clover and Anne when they retire!
- Continue to attract and maintain a significant and talented staff while emphasizing the mission of the church.

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5. Future visioning: What are we called to become?: Answers to Question 9 “Looking ahead, what do you believe FHC is being called to become?” Or as one member asked, “We restored the building: where and how do we reclaim the Mission?”

A Hospitable Church

- Open to diverse cultures, people and opinions
- Culturally sensitive
- Even more inclusive and welcoming
- A safe place for ALL beliefs
- An inclusive, spirit-filled community
- A church with an increasingly diverse population
- Attractive to folks who have never “done church”
- A church that interacts with the Muslim community
- Humble
- A voice of inclusion and respect

A Community and Spiritual Role Model

- An example in the Heights
- A beacon of hope and tolerance
- A beacon of what a fiscally responsible Christian community looks like in 21st century Cleve Hts
- Both a beacon and a fill-up station
- a beacon of hope for those in need
- A beacon for the disenfranchised
- A beacon for younger generation
- A church emphasizing moral leadership in the community
- A holy LORAN (Long Range Assistance to Navigation) like boats and airplanes use
- Continued active force in CH/UH community, especially among younger families
- Where people in the community can to look for leadership
- An influential part of the community
- Community leadership on social issues in Cleveland
- A leader within the Presbyterian organization
- A global leader for community issues and diversity of programming

A Missional Agent for Change

- A champion of needed social change
- A powerful force for change in our community
- Community-based spiritual leader supporting education, housing, economic development
- Source of food/shelter for homeless/people in need
- Community forum for solving social issues
- A church committed to Social Justice
- Transforming a society that privileges some over others
- A leader of social justice in Cleveland Hts and Cleveland
- A place that confronts social ills
- Involved in the greater community
- A service-oriented church
- An innovative, rule-breaking, revolutionary church

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A Stable Church

- Continue as it is now
- More of what it appears to be already:
- To be more of what we are
- We're on the right track
- We're good at what we do
- Continue on same path but adapt budget to the current economy
- Self-supporting
- A steadying force in a changing world

A Supportive, Educational Church

- A place offering practical help for spiritual difficulties
- A place to worship using video and audio experiences
- A church that challenges and responds
- A community of support and stimulation
- A source of comfort and inspiration
- A teaching church, helping people discover their faith
- A church emphasizing study, worship, and fellowship
- A church focused on Civility Project/activities
- A church offering emotional support
- An authentically Christian family
- A place where people know each other by name,
- A supportive community
- Reaching out to members and those in need
- Sharing in the lives of one another

A Neighborhood Church

- A community sanctuary for our neighborhood
- A gathering place for spiritual guidance of people who want to work together to try to help others
- A center for Christian education for ALL ages
- Responsive to the community
- An anchor for the community
- A large multicultural church for our geographic neighborhood
- More accessible to our neighborhood
- A larger presence in the community
- A center of attraction for an expanded area of seekers

A Church Committed to both Inward AND Outward Journeys

- A church with a balance of inward and outward paths
- A place where people discern gifts then use them as living agents of an animating God
- A more Christ-like congregation
- Involved in the future of our youth
- Practicing what we preach
- A faith community that engages the world
- Doing what Christ told us to go into the world and do
- Addressing needs both inside and outside our walls

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6. *“Suggestion Box” Ideas from “Other Comments” section of survey*

- Adult mission trips
- More quiet time before the service
- A quiet place for meditation
- Earlier worship time for families with children
- Air-conditioning for summer worship
- Programs that attract and keep singles, especially just out of college (otherwise hard to get them back later)
- Concern about how our children are received when we keep them with us during worship
- Look into merging with Noble Rd, which is too small to continue indefinitely
- Find ways to collaborate with other churches to sustain the message of Jesus Christ amid resource constraints.
- Explore adding a Contemporary Service
- Encourage each other & share The Joy of Encouragement, by D. David Jeremiah.
- Keep encouraging members to wear name tags.
- Ask teachers to put a sticky name tag on back of toddlers so we can know the little ones by name.
- Help moms with young kids by offering some sort of activities during the week.
- Ask volunteers to bring food for before and after worship.