

Appendix M –Interview Summaries

Discernment Taskforce Interviews

Magic Wand Question: “If FHC was exactly how you wanted it to be”

1. More young families. More racial diversity. The church would have enough money. It would be solvent but still able to do outreach. It would grow people-wise and financially. The worship service would be more evolved. Worship can go deeper. It has “good bones” but could be more grounded. Quietude is missing in the service.
2. FHC be a centering or gathering place for more - the wheel with many spokes. Need more spokes. Want to be that 'incubator' for other good ideas. Faith and Christ filled ideas.
3. Have Alive 360 service; regularly have world music service with more participation. Singing is prayer and I need more. More variety of small groups. Organize a series and invite people (eg. Artists) to participate. Develop next step after Faith Leader.
4. More intentional small groups especially for newer members. Intentional gathering and activities. Continual forming of small groups esp. intergenerational.
5. Something with mission. More ‘all involvement.’ Encouraged we rethink how we fund mission and how members are involved. Encourage the personal involvement – the transformational approach – not just money. Encourage deeper relationships with people we seek to serve.
6. More after-church lunches. He really likes helping to prepare the food, serving it, and eating together as a family. He would also like to change some of the “weird lyrics” to songs he sings in Sine Nomine. (Thought he remembered one song mentioning being sorry for thing like using too much gas or watching too much TV – he thinks that’s kind of a weird thing to sing about in church.)
7. After [death of a family member], stopped going to Forest Hill for at least a year—wanted to be anonymous as well as attend a church within walking distance of home. Lives close to Church of the Saviour, so went there a couple of times, (also Fairmount and First Baptist but found them both too big.) Didn’t mind the denominational difference, but missed FHC’s community. However, she *really* liked all the activity going on all the time at those bigger churches. Also, since we stopped offering yoga, she’s been going to yoga at First Baptist and sees a lot more activity going on there. So one thing she’d use a magic wand for would be to give us a really huge endowment that allowed us to offer more programs, like a farmer’s market, on-going yoga, a really active community child care or nursery school run by the church.
8. A large part of our lack of growth is due to our location. We’re on the edge of a neighborhood with all the Mayfield businesses and Forest Hill Park on two sides, instead of right in the middle of one, so have fewer residences to draw from compared to Fairmount, First Baptist, St. Paul’s,

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and Church of the Saviour. And we're just enough off the beaten path, on the edge of Cleveland Heights and not on as busy a street as Lee or Fairmount to draw in as many commuters. So we need to make an even bigger "splash" if we're going to thrive in our current location.

9. Works in non-profit development and believes we need to develop earned income streams. They don't have to be directly related to our mission—they could even be things such as a doggie day care, a coffee shop, an exercise gym, whatever will draw people in—but they would provide the income we need to offer more mission activities. We just need to get creative in thinking of the right activity to offer.
10. There would be more social fellowship opportunities for people their age (40 and 41).
11. A social group for the next age group, like 20 to 30-year-olds
12. It would have more members and be in better financial shape. There will always be the small versus large discussion. To keep interest and involvement the church must not be too large.
13. Growth of the congregation. There is so much value offered at FHC that others should share in this experience. A growing organization is more vital and has more energy. A large congregation is more likely to have change agents.
14. Continue the trajectory of providing opportunities for exploration of religious beliefs especially through small groups and travel opportunities.
15. Likes the church the way it is. Would like the church to be air conditioned.
16. Focus on strengthening family unity and values and the community which our society has lost sight of. FHC tries its best to do things for family unit but our society is much too materialistic and for individuality. Families need to do more with each other – almost like living in family compounds that you find in other countries.
17. Growing in numbers and vibrant. Our church can be very cliquy, although not intentional, but with more people it wouldn't feel that way. We need to move more outside our four walls and should think more on joining with a non-profit that needs our support.
18. Would like to see involvement with our youth and the youth of other churches. To help expand the vision of our young people within the community and build friendship with others of different denomination. Are we aware of the needs of our congregants, and the community? What are we doing to reach out to them? What have done to assess the needs of those in our community? Would like to see more small group initiatives as they have played an important to many members life in the church.

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19. More vibrancy, more growth, people wanting to be part of the church. It is nice to see that we have people joining the church when so many churches are struggling. Also, continuing to see more diversity pulling from the local community—racial, point of view, etc. Everyone getting more involved in service projects.
20. A couple more players for the softball team this year. Ha! It seems a little early to say (only attended about a year and joined 3-4 months ago). If pressed, would say more family oriented—closer, but this may be impossible given the size of the church.
21. 50 giving units show up at the door. The reality of what the church stands for and it recognized for is social action. A neighbor who is very focused on social action, worked on Obama together, is going to try FHC. That's a reputation I'm proud of. What would I see that is what I most want from or in a church organization? It's that social action. Of course, you have to be financially viable! This is why I spend a lot of time trying to get the church outwardly visible as this helps get people to come and see how we're social active.
22. I don't need to wave a wand; it's great now. We're bickering here and there, but this is true in any group. It's mostly small things. It's amazing that we have a broad range of thoughts and views and feelings, yet we get along so well. Who wants everything smooth and sweet anyway? It's good to have different opinions. I know there were some people who were concerned when we cut the budget for benevolences. I understand it, but we did the right thing. We had to take care of more important things. There are a lot of people that give a lot of stuff outside the church that doesn't show up in our benevolences.
23. Growing membership, pews full of people, expanding new relationships or connections.
24. Be more involved in global mission, outreach, local mission. Impressed with HRRC (Home Repair Resource Center).
25. Would like a play group for "mommies and me." Only time kids get to see other kids as they are not in day care.
26. Congregation would be more diverse. Members would know each other better.
27. Would be wonderful to have greater participation by congregation in actions of social justice. It appears many members are not involved in getting things done. Would like to see the majority get excited about making a difference in the community.
28. Sentiment of change. Nuances of being a part of a religious order. Spiritual standpoint in a very needy world. Branch out more in global mission.
29. Really into Cleveland or the neighborhood. Perhaps doing art through FHC to help the community.

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30. Would like to see a lot more minority (culture) members at the church.
31. Too much age-ism. All social activities are around “ages.” Want more intergenerational stuff. Many of the things in the 40’s interest me, but I am not 40. Would love to see activities not connected to ages...open to all. Also, Bible and Bagels is too early for most people. What about bible literacy activities after church?
32. More integration. “More people **not** just like me” Skin color, less wealth, more of the black community.
33. A mid-week program for children and families . . . helps build community. Also having children in worship and teaching them to worship—it is part of their growing experience. Everyone should be there as part of a community. The experience is about what you receive, but also what you give and being present with God.
34. Welcoming, interfaith congregation. Worship with family where the service is designed for families, not just tolerant of children. Be willing to do smaller services to meet needs.
35. More diversity. Open the church more for the community. More use of the church and identify what some of the needs are in the community.
36. Announcements would not be at the beginning of the service. It detracts from the sense that worship is a sacred time. Do them at the offertory, or at the end of the service.
37. More money coming in and not having to worry about budgets.
38. No budget woes and more general conversations—families talking about faith.
39. Grab the 25-30 age group/singles group and pull them into FHC

What Is FHC Being Called To Become?

- To be challenged and supported... to use her gifts in a way that feeds the poor. Outreach is important wants to be able to plug in to it more.
- A place where people come easily; where other things grow. Incubator perhaps through less traditional means - easy entrance. People yearn and crave foundation. Empower people's giftedness. FHC needs to develop more infrastructure and framework on which to build someone or a team. Lay leadership development continued!

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- FHC is at a crossroad. Could become the face of Cleveland Heights. Really have a great group. Connect across social, racial, money, gender groups. Cleveland Heights in crisis. Can FHC be a place 'where it works?' Can we become a kingdom church?
- Really caring and supportive community and open to supporting others. Welcome and relaxed, not too serious, created a welcome feel. (Cited choir being welcoming).
- More racially integrated and varying socio-economic levels. Would like to see more pilgrimages including local or closer to home. Discussed Gethsemane to walk with T. Merton. Visit where Henri Nowen went to the Benedictine monastery south of Rochester, or the monastery where Kathleen Norris visited in the plains of Dakota.
- Consider a coffee house idea as a means to attract and evangelize as an alternative place of worship or one-on-one interactions.
- Have a program that deliberately welcomes new people and helps them connect in the larger FHC community. More personal invitations to leadership, participation and social events.
- Cornerstone of community. Continuing to work on issues of diversity and to be at the forefront.
- To be an example to other churches and to the community.
- Feels as though we're testing a couple different things right now. For example, the Racial Conversations group...we need to keep growing the congregation to reflect the diversity of our community, but not sure that's the key to our future. Not sure there is one particular thing that we're being called to become because there is so much diversity and competition and ways of being church. For example, a younger niece goes to a home church and is very active in it. It's vital to find ways to continue to make our church relevant to younger generations. Values the comforting nature of some of our worship rituals, but also values that we are equally willing to try new things, new music, new liturgies. To continue to attract new younger people, Forest Hill must focus on things for the youth to do, to keep involving them in the church community.
- Something that offers less structured environments like Bible study, or even worship, in a coffee shop
- Shoes optional?
- FHC must stay and grow as a thriving church community emphasizing relationships and friendships. It must provide a solid and safe place for the youth.
- We should market ourselves better – not sure how to do this though as churches in themselves are somewhat inefficient organizations.

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- Reaching out and helping the people as much as is possible - mostly in the local community. FHC needs to spread out more in order to reach the people in need.
- The church is being called to provide a good Christian path to its members and visitors. All are being called to be giving of self.
- We need to redefine Christianity and make it acceptable. To have a connection to God one must have a connection to the community. FHC has the opportunity to help people with “this is how you do it!” Christianity is needed because of all the tension in the world. People are turning to self (e.g. yoga) rather than to the broader community. Christ wanted us to love one another and FHC can help people pay attention to what is important.
- The Budget is one of the main things the church is facing with the economy being as it is. But being an outreach to the community, showing what God has ask of us toward those with less, the homeless and the poor. This is what we should be promoting and working on now and in the future. If we do our job, God will take care of the budget.
- To become a more caring and giving church showing love for all members of the church. To become a driving force in the community, to see Forest Hill growing spiritually and becoming a more vibrant, nourishing church responding to God’s call in living out our lives on a daily basis.
- Continuing the mission of community involvement...needs to think about this some more. Need to evolve more to find out what those outside the church are looking for- why they are not involved in a faith, adjust to accommodate them and the changing world the best we can.
- To be a place where people can be comfortable growing their spirituality and getting closer to God. We need to inspire our members and get us to critically think about what we believe and making our lives and lives of others around us better. It can be uncomfortable, but it’s necessary. I think we do a good job here. I want to be able to grow my spirituality, and be better in my family, my community and my job.
- Being very inclusive. It’s a very diverse community already and while the church itself is relatively diverse, not homogenous looking, a little more diversity would be good. What do I want to become through my involvement with Forest Hill? More spiritually enlightened, closer to God. One of the primary reasons I attend is it allows me to focus more on spiritual matters.
- A beacon and a sounding board for Cleveland Heights and University Heights, especially in the 2-mile radius around the church. I think it will earn this spot due to what we become involved with (justice, hunger, poor) which is what churches are supposed to work on.

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- A vehicle for faith development in our communities. There are a lot of people yearning without being able to name it.
- Building on what we are already doing by being a vibrant and open community of joyful worship and spiritual and physical renewal. A place where all would feel welcome; all races and social classes.
- Wants to see how he could best use his spiritual gifts to fit into the bigger picture. How can he be used to make the world a better place and be a minister of some sort to others.
- An outreach program that brings people in through different programs being offered, not necessarily God related activities. She would like to be able to volunteer more.
- Leader in the community. Would like to be a part of opening our arms to the community
- Believes we are on the right track with social justice being a priority. Would like to become more personally involved in social justice.
- We are called to become a modern church. Wants to be part of a community at FHC.
- Would like to continue enjoying everybody and helping in any way I can. Wants to continue telling people about the church. Talks about FHC all the time.
- To be an agent of Change. We could really make change if we are connected in a bigger circle. If there is more, other churches in connection. You can't do it as one small entity. IHN is very powerful. By being of the larger community, we can see where the problems come from and make more grassroots change.
- A social beacon
- A community leader at the community level. Prayerful attention to social justice issues and be an anchor in the community – Greater Cleveland area.
- A beacon in the community (not just Cleveland Heights but greater Cleveland Community).
- Stay uniquely Presbyterian.
- Find its place in a different world. Church can be slow to meet people. Many wonder why they are losing members. What are we doing to keep up? Be willing to do more bold changes. People seem open (eg. AWE services and music).
- Open, inclusive, community forum for resolving social issues, a change agent.

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- We need to claim the radical example of Jesus and live out love and joy through real justice and service to others...would like to see a deeper relationship of the people who attend FHC and worship, a deeper engagement of the congregation with the broader community, and that everyone claims faith to do things.
- We need to “open our doors real wide” and become more intentionally inclusive of the people who live in the Forest Hill neighborhood, and to more intentionally make FHC a welcoming home for GLBT’s. We need to offer on a regular basis, perhaps monthly, a different kind of worship service, one that’s less about following a liturgy and more about contemplative connections with God. She especially likes the Taize chants and the way she feels closer to God in the repetitive singing as well as Federated Church’s “Alive360” service and last year’s AWE services.
- We’re becoming a hybrid church: one that respects tradition but is open to innovation and inclusion and moving away from institutional terms like reformed. The music Anne Wilson chooses, and the way she mixes in all different types of music, are a perfect example of our new hybrid way of being. We’re called to become even more permission giving, less institutional, less committee driven, and that we need to take bigger risks in order to build energy and attract new members. There’s a significant market share of church-goers who attend large, conservative churches not because of the theology but because of the exciting stuff that goes on at those churches.
- Wants people to come to Forest Hill who are young at heart, interested in pushing boundaries, intellectually and spiritually engaged, who want their faith to be focused on personal transformation and social transformation. He wants Forest Hill to be the magic wand that makes this happen. He thinks this can happen without radical change, as long as we stay on the path we’re on but focus on growing our membership, and increasing turnover. He especially wants to see people between the ages of 20 and 30, the singles and the married without kids, to feel they belong here. He said we need to find out what draws them here, and what are they looking for.
- Forest Hill is called to be an evangelically open-minded progressive church that transforms lives and then transforms society.

What Inspires FHC Financial Giving?

- It’s part of the accountability for receiving gifts that are given. Being part of a family. This is a household of faith; feel like giving to the family. It’s a symbiotic relationship. It is life-giving, regenerating to contribute to a vital community. Grateful for being fed and wants to give back.
- Place is important. Serving on session is helpful to understand the struggles and tension on how to use funds. Part of faithfulness. Necessary for church and faithful and trust it is used well.

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- When we paint a picture of how money is being used. Eg. Food pantry was mentioned. Someone said how the needs of the people we met at FHC. Made it real.
- Gratitude in FHC and belief in the ministries. It's a sacrificial gift and doesn't come easily (referring to \$). Hard to give when it is less tangible (don't know how money is being spent and impact on the world).
- Loyal and dedicated group making decisions – it's not a dictatorship – we use wise choices.
- Depends on how much we have to give and then I address issue of sacrifice within myself.
- Being part of something you believe in and hope to make a difference and better. I want to do it
- He doesn't give very much money to the church because as a high school student, he usually doesn't **have** any money. He likes the idea of giving "to the basket they pass around for the poor" but he usually doesn't have any money on him. And he had no idea what happens to the money that is collected during the offering. He said he "kind of assumed it was being given to the poor."
- She gives because FHC gives to her, and she wants to give back to FHC.
- In her business (non-profit development), she knows that people give (1) because they're asked and (2) because they have a connection to the mission of the organization. And when she was on the Case alumni board, she learned that a third reason people give money to their college is to protect the integrity of their degree. She wants to preserve the place she cares about. She feels a mutual bond with Forest Hill. She wants to keep it in good shape and standing so it can help other people the way it helped her.
- Tithing is part of her background—she grew up in a tithing family. She said that she and Jeremy were incredibly impressed with the way the building campaign was conducted. They thought the literature—the brochure and the letters—made it very clear what money was needed for, how each dollar was going to be spent, and why it was important to raise and spend the funds at this moment in time. Because of the great communication about the campaign, she said they never felt pressured that they **had** to give, but instead felt **led** to be involved in, and part of, the whole undertaking.
- Members must give in order to sustain the operations of the church.
- The great leadership at FHC inspires giving – primarily the ministers - and recognition that the lay leaders do a lot of "heavy lifting".

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- As a high school student with limited financial resources he is unable to give money. He plans to do so in the future.
- Financially is unable to give much at all at this time but wants to do more in the future.
- To support the salaries of John and Clover because they do so much – they are doing the hard work. They give much more to FHC than to any other organization.
- I believe in and support the church in all its endeavors. Being realistic the pastors salaries needs to be paid as well as other staffers. The building must be maintain for our safety and to have a building that we are proud of, and programs don't run themselves. There are many reasons that I give to the church without hesitation. However, with a child finishing college an another starting it doesn't allow me much space to increase my giving, but I want to and will as time and money permits.
- I believe that one should support the church. I feel that the programs that we have at church are worthwhile and should be supported. I support our pastoral staff and feel what they contribute to the church is more than the compensation that they receive. I personally would like to give more in the way of pledging, but with a young person in college is rather difficult at this time. I appreciate what the church does with the monies that they do receive. The church has always been up front in keeping us abreast of our financial position and I feel comfortable that all monies are being handled in an honest and caring way. I want to see us maintain the ministries that we have in place and hope to see more in the way of a community ministry.
- I want it to grow and flourish for others to enjoy. I do feel a sense of obligation. I feel that it is worth it to support.
- I feel a connection and appreciate what I get out of it and what the church does. It's an organization that's meaningful and worth being a part of. Obviously, a financial stable FHC is one that is going to be able to maintain the things that we're doing—ministry, music, community outreach, plus lights and heat and water, maintaining the physical space as it's a comfortable place to be.
- We need it to operate and we need money to do so if we want it to continue to do so.
- I'm one who firmly believes that an integral part of your faith is giving part of what you have to the church. You cannot separate the two. There are a lot of members over the years that didn't exactly agree with what the church was doing, still felt obligated to support and grow the organization. Told a story of a very conservative member who always gave as this was separate from his views

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- We're willing because of the willingness of the entire congregation and efforts of John and Clover, the upfront honesty, further, we can do it, our kids are gone so we have the means.
- It's about sacrifice, holding it loosely, agitation about tithing—it's intense and vital. It's hard to know what giving will look like given our outflow of money getting the business started.
- FHC has good things going on. Believes in what we are doing and what we will continue to do.
- Likes that we give money to organizations that help others and you can follow the organizations.
- Their knowledge of our tough economic situation and because what they give is appreciated.
- You want to help and trust your efforts will count and that resources are used and managed wisely.
- The church does a lot for them. Cannot participate in other ways, wants to help out financially.
- My grandparents would keep their money in the freezer, they were a part of the Depression era. My grandfather would go down to the basement and into the freezer every Sunday morning to get out his morning offering. They gave 10% of their income. That was just how it was done. I have seen what other churches have done, you just have to be thoughtful and consistent. Giving is being part of a community.
- The spiritual belief that what God has given me should be shared.
- I look at my disposable income and what I am comfortable with, without sacrificing my retirement. The discipline of tithing is good. Making a commitment is putting your faith in action. You can't have an Anne Wilson without putting it out!
- Forest Hill is my church home. My financial giving depends on how much money I have.
- Financial giving is about loving one another unconditionally. FHC is that place that love is reflected unconditionally. On some level I was taught to give. It was modeled by my parents. It is expected as part of my faith. It is a way to get out of myself and be a part of a bigger story.
- Participation level inspires giving. Doing social justice and mission matters. Would give more if peas on specific issues or specific organizations.
- Believes what the church stands for social justice and that we are heading in the right direction, but not necessarily sold on the 10% tithing, but believe in sharing God's blessing.
- Giving is motivated by the call to deliver peace, justice and outreach in the world. Historically, their prior church used a sort of "grant committee" approach to mission. The church structure

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provided a mechanism to distribute gifts in ways appropriate to the church’s mission. At the same time, just keeping the lights on brings the world into contact with the chance to see God. So they give to keep that going.

- She values the programs that FHC offers its members and knows they don’t come free; she knows it’s an obligation to give financially.
- He gives because he’s at his best when he does: it’s fun, and he wants to be part of a community that claims Jesus as its model...because it’s a way to support the community, especially when the church is clear about its needs and why it’s asking. “I would want to be part of Forest Hill Church even if I wasn’t on staff here.” Education, his social life, worship, entertainment, friendships, softball, all of the relationships he has BECAUSE of Forest Hill---without Forest Hill, he said he’d have nothing left.

Interview Quotes

- Finding a place with a “Christ-centered” faith that welcomes everyone is rare. FHC is fun. It lets people be creative. It does serious work without taking itself too seriously. The leaders are models – fun, strong and positive.
- Being invited is important (to worship, education, ministry, small groups)
- Proud (I am proud of FHC) because allowing people to preach is indicative of sharing power/lack of hierarchy. Not lip service when we say we are committed
- FHC sustains and nurtures me to do work in the world.
- I give because God is good and I trust the church to make decisions on money.
- I give because I believe in the mission of FHC.
- FHC encourages you to explore what your feelings are rather than telling you what your feelings should be. We accept you without judgment -- “to be heard and to hear” and “to see”.
- “I like that I’m religious.”
- “We’re off the beaten path compared to the larger more active churches in the area, but there’s no reason why we can’t develop earned income streams to fund our mission. We just need to get creative and think of the right activity to offer.”

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- She looks around some Sundays and wonders why John is preaching a sermon that feels was written just for her.
- “All of my friends **know** about Forest Hill.”
- “The practicality of sustaining an organization like Forest Hill Church is that someone must pay for what they are getting. We must first focus on the operation of Forest Hill Church and trust the church to spend the money wisely.”
- “There is so much value offered at FHC that others, if they knew about it, would want to share in the experience. We need a growing congregation as a larger congregation has more energy and is more likely to have change agents. We need to continue the current trajectory of providing small group opportunities for religious exploration.”
- “Church takes one away from the day to day issues and concerns”.
- “I came to FHC after being in the Peace Corps in the Ukraine for 2 years. I found it beyond my expectations and felt it was God’s plan that FHC be the place for me to be.”
- “We do everything right, but there needs to be more of us to have a greater impact”.
- “Hoping that all members of the church would feel truly valued so not to feel excluded. Helping all members find love in the church.”
- It’s a refuge and a place of support....
-we should stay committed to social justice. It was a very appealing thing about the church.
- Social justice....is our stamp of identity. While you’re doing it, there are a lot of things the church does such as providing community and support, but this is the overriding element. .
- It’s amazing that we have a broad range of thoughts and views and feelings, yet we get along so well.
- It’s started as an obligation and now, instead of draining me, it fills me up.
- Forest Hill Church needs to continue being a beacon of welcome to others and reach out to others for the betterment of all.
- The Church is a safety net.

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- ... most proud to be a part of FHC while attending a memorial service for a Cleveland Heights policeman that had been shot. Many members of FHC attended the service.
- Church should be an advocate for the poor.
- Youth group very important.
- I have seen what other churches have done (from the very poor ones to the wealthy), You just have to be thoughtful and consistent. It helps me to be thoughtful of how I am using my money. Giving is being a part of a community.
- I like what I go away with.
- “Without being a part of the church I would not have been involved [with such activities as Abundance Acres or IHN], but I am glad that I am.”
- I am a better person after I go to church.
- To be greater than the sum of our parts everyone has to be willing to be givers and connect to the common good—to get, you must give – walk the talk.
- The discipline of tithing is good. Making a commitment is putting your faith in action. You can’t have an Anne Wilson without putting it out!
- “It (financial giving) is a way to get out of myself and be a part of a bigger story.”
- That Forest Hill was not an empty vessel, that an organization like IHN could pour its people into and not expect us to not feel something, i.e. restrictions on us to refrain from discussions; not asking them or their children to join us in worship or other things we might have going on during the week while they are staying with us.
- I never felt judged here.
- I love the emphasis on mission – otherwise, what’s the point of church?
- Prior to FHC, we had trouble finding a spiritual community that both comforted and challenged us.

Church Staff Quotes:

- “I would want to be part of Forest Hill Church even if I wasn’t on staff here.”

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- “It’s the donut church.” – quoting her children who were describing which church they wanted to go back to.
- “You’re allowed to be who you are. The community is OK with who it is. The feel of the community is authentic, so there is no projection of insecurities onto others.”
- “The people you feel most connected to are the ones you laugh with.”
- “Churches have a big tendency to talk a lot, and not do so much. It would be good to see tangible action – from big changes to decisions not to change.”