

FPCB Congregational Survey Results

Background

During a Session Retreat in August 2023, there was a discussion about how many changes the church had had to undergo because of the recent pandemic. Church services had had to be videotaped on a live-stream on Facebook and all other gatherings stopped altogether for about a year in 2020-2021; and while the church was now back in full swing, there were still a number of changes from the way it operated pre-pandemic. For one, the church had gone from having two services, one a praise format, the other traditional, to a single service with a blended format. And while most people had returned to in-person attendance, there was still almost half who attended virtually. Several members asked if the church had ever done a survey of the congregation to see what aspects of the church people liked and maybe didn't like about how the church is operating today. What do they like about the current worship format, the music? What activities at the church do they enjoy doing the most? What missions are important to them? Are there things that they DON'T enjoy about the church, and are there things that they are really unhappy about? What are some things that we do that maybe people just aren't interested in doing anymore? Are there any real trouble areas or red flags that we need to look at?

A survey was developed to try to answer these questions. It was designed to be easy to fill out, whether it was done online or on paper. The survey was multiple choice, with several questions having a space where comments could be included, if desired. The survey became available online on 1 November, with a cut-off date of 19 November 2023. A total of 105 surveys were returned.

On Sunday, 12 November 2023, following a shortened service, Pastor Mike led the congregation in an informal discussion we called "Donuts and Discussion." The idea was to get some more direct feedback from the congregation, and to also see if there were some additional areas not covered by the survey that was of interest to church members.

Below are the questions in order of their appearance on the survey. Any comments that were made in the various blocks designated for that purpose are included below the summary of results and commentary on the respective questions. Where appropriate, I have also included specific comments elicited from the "Donuts and Discussion" event that pertain to the survey question at hand. Attached to this report are a printout of the "Donuts and Discussion" recorded comments as well as a copy of the survey questions with the total number of "votes" each possible response received.

1. "How long have you been a member of FPCB?" Responses seem to indicate that this is an older, well-established church. By far the largest response was "More than 20 years," around 42% of the total surveys returned. Next highest was "Five to 20 years" at a little under a third of the total responses. Relatively few responses were from people who are new to the church or are not current members. Clearly, this indicates an older, well-established church with a stable, but perhaps slowly dwindling church body.

2. "How frequently do you attend services (virtually and/or in person) at FPCB?"
Responses indicate that those who took the time to fill out the survey attend services very

regularly. Around 85% of the respondents said they attend church weekly, a very high percentage. That seems to suggest that those who come to church at all are dedicated believers who are heavily invested in our church's worship style and/or its activities.

3. "How active of a member/attendee are you at FPCB?" About 14% of respondents stated that, while they attend service, they are not otherwise active in the church. A slightly smaller number said they are "somewhat" active in the life of the church. Another 26% said they were "moderately" active, saying they have church friends and occasionally attend events outside of worship. But by far the largest segment (47%) said they are "quite" active, having many church friends and are involved in numerous activities. Added to those who said they are "moderately" active in FPCB, this suggests that nearly three-quarters of the congregation do not view church as a Sunday only experience. Rather, they are also committed to the missions, activities and the people that FPCB provides.

4. "Why is it important to YOU to attend a church?" Respondents were asked to choose up to three statements that best describe their reasons for coming to church – NOT FPCB specifically, but rather in general. We wanted to see what motivates people to come to church in the first place. Three answers received a big majority of votes: "To become closer to God" (63), "To learn more about God and His Word" (63) – and the biggest draw: "To be part of a faith community" (86). The idea of being part of a community of faith, a community of believers and of fellowship appears to be a huge motivator for those who took the survey. Other possible reasons listed in the survey also received votes, but not to the same extent. These included: "So my children/family will have a strong moral foundation (21), "To become a better person" (38), and "To participate in service activities that are hard to find outside of a church (22). A couple of people added their own reasons, which are recorded below:

"By golly, all of the above."

"To pray together with other Christians for our weekly sins." (This comment, too, seems to suggest the idea of having fellowship or community as noted above.)

5. "Why do you attend FPCB in particular?" Here again, respondents were asked to choose up to three statements that best describe their reasons for attending our particular church. Nearly two-thirds said they do it because they "love the people at church" (66). Another sizeable chunk of those surveyed (about 50%) said they "find the sermons valuable" (52). To a lesser degree, but still substantial, respondents said, "I believe in the missions and community service in which FPCB participates" (41), "I like the worship style of FPCB" (35), and "I love the music" (28). There were also a number of people who said, "I have always been a Presbyterian and am comfortable with that" (25). Another 21 respondents said they enjoy participating in activities at FPCB and 11 said that FPCB offers activities their family enjoys.

"The small group support (CUPIDS) is important to me."

"My kids grew up in this church. They were loved and nurtured here. I want that same joy and support to be available for other families. I also love being a part of such a mission driven church community."

"Committed; it's the first place we planted our feet."

“To have the opportunity to take Holy Communion.”

“Pastor Mike is amazing.”

“I feel accepted here.”

Similar reasons for being a part of FPCB were recorded during the “Donuts and Discussion” event held at the church on 12 November 2023. (A copy of the notes made from that discussion are at the back of this paper.) There were 14 positive comments regarding fellowship and/or a sense of community that different people felt about the church. Another 13 or so comments expressed satisfaction with the worship service at FPCB. Ten comments discussed the importance of various church missions and community service. Pastor Mike and/or his sermons were mentioned at least five times.

6. “Does the worship music at FPCB resonate with you? (Do you like it?)” Due to the quirks of the survey, some people had more than one response to this question, which was intended to submit only one answer. Eleven people made comments, which technically required them to check the box that said, “I don’t feel a connection to the worship music because....” However, most of these people also checked another box, generally the box that said, “Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t.” The way the survey question was worded probably dissuaded more people from commenting because of the negative connotations. This was unfortunate, as it would have been nice to have gotten more feedback from the congregation about this particular area of worship.

Of those surveyed, 40% said, “Yes, the music at FPCB helps me feel a deeper connection to God.” Another 17% said, “Yes, it helps me feel more connected to the congregation.” The question attempted to see how people viewed the music in terms of their worship experience. Of course, the fact that the quirks of the survey made it possible for people to check both of these boxes made that more difficult, but only about a quarter of respondents actually did. So, while we cannot use simple addition to determine total positive responses (40% + 17%), we can say that the total number of positive responses – the “Yes” responses – correspond to about half of the congregation.

There were also a number of respondents who were somewhat less enthusiastic about the music, stating, “Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t” (45%). Unfortunately, there wasn’t a comment section attached to that box where people could feel free to say WHY it sometimes works and sometimes “doesn’t.” A few people did add comments for Question 6, but they technically had to check the box that said they “don’t feel a connection to the worship music” before doing so. (This was one of the deficiencies in this particular survey; there were not enough places where people could feel free to make a comment without having to say first that they “didn’t like” something.) The majority of people who added comments had also checked the box that said, “Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t.” Comments mainly focused on the style of music, with about half saying they prefer more traditional hymns and the other half saying they would rather have praise music instead. There were also a few comments that suggested the respondents thought there was just a little “too much” music.

“Hymns are great, and the songs themselves are great, but the style in which they're done is often distracting from the flow and connection to worship. I feel as though I'm back in marching band?”

I'd also love to hear more harmonies instead of only melodies. Thanks for letting me be honest here. I'd enjoy more organ and piano and less band. Also love hearing the choir."

"I am from the old-style music."

"It's much too slow. I would like the music to give energy not subtract energy."

"I like hymns. I do not like singing prayers. It's a weird place in between traditional and contemporary. I miss the choir."

"I am in the choir and prefer our seating arrangement on the left side next to the piano instead of way across the room next to the organ."

"Don't like singing more than 3 verses of a hymn -- especially if it is not well known. Not enough praise singers! Some encouraged NOT to come back after COVID."

"Selections don't touch my soul."

"Don't care for contemporary music, too repetitive. How can we sing a new/difficult song without music? Sometimes too much drums; love piano and other instruments."

"Need more hymns." (Twice)

"Praise." (Twice)

"I do not like singing so many verses."

Of the 141 comments recorded during the "Donuts and Discussion" event (some of them addressing more than one topic), a quarter (34) were specifically about the music during worship. Some comments were positive, some were a little critical, and some simply stated a preference of one type of music over another. As in the survey, when a preference was stated, it was about half and half, praise music vs. traditional. We are a "divided" church, that is for sure. But that doesn't necessarily mean that people are willing to go to war over this! In fact, many comments indicate an understanding of the need for compromise; they simply would like us to consider having a little more of "this" and a little less of "that," and/or maybe a little "less" altogether. My understanding is the Music leadership is already working on this.

7. "Does the worship service as a whole resonate with you?" A full 46% of those surveyed said they usually love the worship service, while another 37% said they enjoy the service "most of the time." Here the survey online only allowed one response. Therefore, we can add both responses to get a good approximation of the number of people who generally enjoy the weekly service. It adds up to about 84% of respondents, a very high percentage. It appears that, even if some in the congregation have a few quibbles about the music, they LIKE the worship service itself. Ten said the service is "sometimes hit or miss, but I come anyway."

In order to leave a comment, respondents had to click, "I have not been happy with the service for quite a while, because..." Only a couple of those surveyed clicked this response, probably because many found this wording too negative, discouraging respondents from adding any

comments. (This was again a weakness in the survey, in that respondents likely did not feel free to make a comment unless they chose a negative response.)

The comments themselves in this section were not all that negative, more like constructive criticism or suggestions:

“We no longer have an offering or traditional communion and I feel those are integral parts of worship. Also I miss a bulletin, it is helpful sometimes to let the words resonate with me throughout the service.”

“More like the 8:30 service. I miss the more traditional services.”

Another respondent used the question about the music (Question 6) to make this comment, which I have placed here: “We need bulletins again! We need communion with passing the bread and wine.”

Similar comments can be found in the notes from the “Donuts and Discussion” event. Roughly 24 positive comments about various aspects of the current worship service were recorded from this event. There were several comments about communion (at least 7 by my count), virtually all asking to get rid of the disposable cups and/or go back to a more traditional way of doing communion. This, of course, is already being made ready for implementation once the current supply is depleted. There were also a few requests for paper bulletins, passing around the collection plate and a few other, more traditional, acts (for example, the “Doxology”) that have fallen by the wayside in the blended service we now have. A couple of people complained about the heavy use of the projector and live streaming of the church service. However, live streaming is an invaluable service to those who find it difficult or impossible to worship in person; perhaps it would be useful to occasionally remind the congregation how many people benefit from the live streaming of our worship service.

8. “Is the current worship service time (9:30 a.m.) good for you?” Respondents were by far in favor of the current worship schedule (82%), a very high percentage. Of those who said “No,” three preferred an earlier time (8:30) and 11 specified a later time, anywhere between 10 and 11 o’clock. This was still a small percentage of the responses, however. There were no suggestions for a different worship time recorded during the “Donuts and Discussion” event. I believe this shows the congregation is by and large content with the worship schedule as it is.

9. “Is the current worship format, one ‘blended’ service with both praise and traditional elements, good for you?” This question also received a significantly favorable response; more than three-quarters (76%) of respondents said they liked the blended service. Another 11% said it was okay, but there should be more services with different formats. That percentage goes up a little (to 14%) when you include remarks from people who responded “No” and who then specifically commented that there should be two different services with different formats. Those who said “No” to the current worship format and who made comments amounted to about 13% of the total responses. Four said they prefer a praise service, four said they prefer a more traditional service and four specifically said there was just “too much” music for a one-hour service. Some of these comments would also apply to Questions 6 and/or 7 above.

“Yes, but there should be more services with different formats.”

“I would prefer two services. One traditional and one up-lifting.”

“I do not like the praise service.”

“I prefer the praise format; however, appreciate the traditional. I think combining takes away from both.”

“I would prefer a traditional service as before COVID.”

“Traditional worship is my preference.”

“Too much music for a one-hour service. 3 praise songs, 2 hymns, 1 anthem, bells production.”

“I like the praise format best. I think the ‘blend’ is awkward and ridiculous.”

“I like the praise band, but with the choir also it is too much music!”

“No, there should be more services with different formats.”

“I like the old 1st service, but I understand the need to compromise.”

“Doesn’t really meet any need.”

“Yes, [but] I wish there was a little more traditional, though.”

As noted earlier, the “Donuts and Discussion” event underscored the importance our parishioners place on the music in particular during worship. However, more people commented on aspects of worship other than the music during this event than they did in the survey itself, which was good. There were suggestions for having at least some paper bulletins, passing the collection plate and/or the communion elements, recognizing visitors, using the pew Bibles more instead of relying on the projector, etc. Most of these comments were skewed toward a more traditional service format.

10. “Church office hours are currently 8:30 am – 1:30 pm Monday through Friday. In

your opinion, do you feel: ____” Possible responses were that the current hours are “appropriate” for a church of our size OR that current hours need to be “expanded” to meet the needs of a church of our size. (This survey did not give an option to reduce the hours.) Positive responses amounted to 86% of those surveyed. Another 6% indicated the hours need to be expanded. It appears that parishioners are quite satisfied with the status quo.

11. “What do you think of our church facility?” Almost 89% of respondents said they believe our building and grounds are “good” for a church of our size and mission. Only one respondent thinks the church is “inadequate” to meet our needs. Several people checked the “Other” box so they could add comments as below:

“Parking area needs to be addressed. Poor signage.”

“Building and grounds are good, but I feel the church is hidden. It needs a sign or something, so people know it’s there.”

“I think our facility is exceptional, especially for providing meeting space for outside groups such as AA.”

“Good size but need help keeping it clean both inside and out.”

“Seems obvious, glaringly underutilized.”

“The service needs to be mic-ed into the fellowship hall and the nursery.”

“The church yard needs more flower beds.”

“More people, hidden, though; [need] more signs. Preschool?” (Not sure what last comment re preschool is meant to suggest.)

There were six or so comments about the church facility recorded during the “Donuts and Discussion” event, depending on how you slice it. They were generally favorable, with a couple of suggestions for improvement, including updating the library and more building and grounds cleanup.

12. “Do you feel FPCB is good at welcoming visitors?” This question had three “Yes” possibilities, including one I would consider a somewhat “lukewarm” yes, and one “No” possibility. The survey did not offer a space for comments. Around 13% of respondents said they were relatively new and were warmly received by the congregation when they first came. Another 51% of respondents said they have “frequently” witnessed members of the church welcome visitors. Together, those two responses (around 64%) indicate that most of those surveyed believe the church is very “welcoming” to visitors.

However, about a quarter of respondents (27%) said, “Yes, in recent years I have occasionally witnessed members welcome visitors,” what I would term a rather tepid response. What was interesting to me was that six of those 28 respondents said they were not members of the church, which begs the question: do THEY feel they have been warmly received by the congregation? There was no place for comments on this question, so that remains open. On the other hand, only one person said they have not seen visitors get a warm welcome, and that person said they have been a member for over 20 years. This particular question had a fairly high number (8) of what I call “non-respondents,” people who left the question blank. I am making an assumption that those who didn’t answer probably felt unqualified to do so. If we factor them out, the percentage of respondents who consider the church “very” welcoming is more like 70%, with another 29% who perceive our church as perhaps a bit slapdash at welcoming visitors.

There were several comments during the “Donuts and Discussion” event that indicate a concern for visitors and for making them feel welcome. A couple of people said we need to have more greeters/ushers and another suggested we recognize visitors during the worship service itself. Anecdotally, one reason my husband and I came back to this church after our first visit was because we were greeted outside the church – after the service had just started – by two friendly men we later came to know as Mike Yasenchak and Doug Vartanian. No other church we visited up to that point when we first moved here had ever had anyone come greet us our first time there. It was a factor when we joined our previous church in Virginia, too. Never underestimate the importance of a good greeter!

13. “Do you feel FPCB is sensitive to the major needs of congregants?” This question had “Yes” answers embedded in two of the four possible answers. Half of respondents (50%) said they have seen the church help people with real needs. Another 16% said they have actually been the recipient of help from the church when they needed it. Together, that’s around two-thirds of respondents who have either seen the church help others or seen the church help them personally. (The survey did not allow multiple answers on this one, and there was no opportunity to make comments.) Another quarter of respondents stated they were “unsure,” what I would consider a “lukewarm” response. Five people said they have either had a major need or known people with major needs and felt that “nobody noticed.” Nearly everyone who submitted a survey answered this and the following question (#14), so I feel confident that the responses indicate the church body believes FPCB in general does try to meet the needs of its members who are grieving or in a crisis or serious situation. However, there remains about a third of our parishioners who are either unsure about the church’s commitment to those of our number who are in need or who think we are not doing a good job at that.

“Donuts and Discussion” elicited a few comments that were generally positive, but also suggested areas where we could do better recognizing and addressing the needs of our congregants. Positive comments included: “Support during loss,” “When there’s a loss – all are supportive – cards, notes, literature are appreciated,” “Help people who need it” (written on the “What energizes us” column and could have a couple of different meanings). One commenter said, “Check on people who all of a sudden quit coming to church (ex: card, call, etc.) While this is probably meant more as a way to let members know we have noticed their absence and invite them back, it is also a means of discovering if someone is suffering some sort of health or other crisis, so that we can offer assistance if needed. Another commenter said, “Follow up if someone is dissatisfied.” The commenter does not indicate with what a person might be dissatisfied (the worship service, a Bible study, this or that mission area?); but this is another way to find out if something more is going on with a parishioner than might appear at first glance.

14. “Do you feel FPCB attempts to address actual needs within the local community?” There were again two “Yes” answers of four possibilities for this question. We were trying to tease out the level of commitment to the local community the congregation believes we have. One-third of respondents (32%) said FPCB is “fully involved” in the local community, while well over half of those surveyed said the church “tries to address” the needs of the local community. Together, this represents 90% of the church members who believe the church is doing at least some good to those who live in the nearby area, a very high percentage. As noted in the previous section, nearly everyone who submitted a survey answered this question, so I am confident in the assertion that – certainly in the minds of the congregation – FPCB seriously tries to work with the local community to meet the needs of our neighbors. Only six people said the church “doesn’t understand” the local community at all. Two people suggested the church should expend more effort on fulfilling the spiritual needs of the congregation instead of so much emphasis on the outside world.

As noted in Question 5 above, there were at least 10 comments in the “Donuts and Discussion” event that directly address in a positive way the church’s deep commitment to various, mostly local, missions.

15. “FPCB allows the FPCB Preschool and several outside groups (such as AA Gamblers Anonymous and OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute)) to hold meetings or have

activities inside our church facility. Do you believe this should be part of our mission? This question was another attempt to gauge the commitment of members to the outside community, i.e., how important it is to church members that we engage with the local community. This question was formatted to accept multiple answers, which enabled members to add other groups they thought should be encouraged to use the church facilities. An overwhelming number of respondents (92%) said they believe the church should allow these and other groups to use the facilities. Only three people said they feel that some of the groups are “not the best mix” for the church. One member said there were “too many” non-church groups.

“Church youths, church groups and movement[s], marriages (Christian).”

“So glad OLLI classes are being scheduled here!”

“Any group that is keeping with our mission of serving God’s people. I think the building should be used by the community.”

“Boy Scouts and/or Girl Scouts.”

16. “Do you feel FPCB spends its budget on things that are important to fulfilling the church’s missions and vision?” This question offered two “Yes” responses, one negative response and another somewhat “lukewarm” response. Over 67 of those surveyed (64%) said they feel the church budget “reflects spending on things that really matter.” Another 13 respondents (12%) suggested they have no great concerns about the budget (“So long as we are meeting our obligations, I am not worried about it.”). I consider this answer reflective of respondents who may not be familiar with – or even interested in – the church’s budget, but who think the things we are doing as a church body are fine. Adding these together represents a little more than three-quarters of those surveyed (76%) who are not overly concerned about the church’s spending habits. If you factor out “non-responses” (7 people did not answer this question), the two favorable responses represent 82% of the actual respondents, a very high percentage. Only five of those surveyed said they feel the church should be “more careful in its spending.” A small percentage (12%) of respondents said they would like to better understand how the church spends its money.

17. “FPCB has a ‘backpack’ campaign every summer to benefit the students at Beth-El. Would you like to continue with this campaign?” This question and the one following were specifically requested by the Mission Committee in order to discern the congregation’s attitude regarding the Beth-El ministry which the church has been involved in for a number of years. The result was overwhelmingly favorable. A full 79% of those surveyed (85% if you include only those who answered this question) said we should continue this particular campaign. (This question had a fairly high number of non-respondents (7). I am making an assumption that those who did not answer felt unqualified to do so.) Nine people felt we should continue to do a backpack campaign, but with a different group. The survey does not provide a means of discerning what organization the respondents would prefer; I am assuming they would prefer a more local group. Six people said they feel we should discontinue this type of ministry altogether.

18. “FPCB has a Christmas campaign each year to benefit the families of Beth-El. Would you like to continue with this campaign?” Again, the response to this question was overwhelmingly favorable. Eighty percent of respondents (84% if you count only those who

answered the question) said we should continue this ministry. There were 11 people who said they would like to see a Christmas campaign that works with a different group. As in the previous question, I assume these respondents would prefer to work with a more local group. Five respondents said we should discontinue this type of ministry.

19. “Throughout the course of a year, FPCB supports 4 special Presbyterian offerings. How many would you support and which ones?” There has been some concern in the church that perhaps we ask for too many donations to various church-related causes. The Mission Committee wanted to see how the church body feels about the four special offerings that FPCB does at various times during the year. Respondents could vote for each one separately. The one offering that garnered the most votes (90) was “One Great Hour of Sharing,” which has been a tradition of the Presbyterian Church for seven decades. To a lesser degree, but still with a substantial number of votes, were the Pentecost offering (55), “Peace and Global Witness” (56), and “Christmas Joy,” which received 61 votes. Ninety votes is a huge share of the total number of surveys submitted; it means 86% of respondents are committed to keeping this offering available.

While a number of people voted for only one or two of the offerings, half of respondents voted for at least three of the four special offerings. Those who voted for three offerings nearly all included “One Great Hour of Sharing,” while the other two “slots” were roughly divided among the other three offerings. In addition, 43 of those surveyed chose all four of the offerings, which amounts to about 40% of those surveyed. There were 11 non-responses to this question. Based on their responses to other questions, about half of these “non-responses” likely reflect people who don’t know enough about the church’s various missions and activities to indicate a preference, and about half are people who have concerns about spending, whether that be their own spending or what the church spends on various missions. There was no box in the survey for respondents to check “None of the above.”

Comments during “Donuts and Discussion” also allude to a few concerns about the many causes members are asked to contribute to throughout the year. “[Reduce s]pecial offerings to two. Presbyterians always being asked for money,” said one. Another said, “Streamline our offerings (rather than 4-5 different ones).” This is a tough one! On the one hand, less than half of the congregation say they support all four of these special offerings. On the other hand, respondents weren’t asked which ones they would want to get RID of, merely which ones they could support! This might need to be vetted more thoroughly to get a better feel for where the congregation is on this issue.

20. “Are there any causes or charities, specific or general, in which YOU think FPCB should be actively involved and which we currently are not?” This question was asking for direct input from the congregation regarding the types of missions they could support that we do not currently do to any extent. There were 31 “non-responses” to this question, or about 30% of the total number of submissions. I do not believe this is merely a factor of people not knowing enough to offer any preferences, but rather, to a greater or lesser degree, a choice in itself. This could indicate that a significant minority of the church body believes we are at capacity – or, perhaps for some, even over-capacity – in terms of our commitment to various causes. However, that still leaves over half the membership that might (emphasis on the “might”) be interested in other mission areas.

The largest vote-getter was Feeding Tampa Bay at 48 votes, followed by an interest in Habitat for Humanity at 37 votes. Statistically, these two had significant-to-overwhelming support, depending on how you factor in the non-responses. Feeding Tampa Bay garnered 46% of the total submissions and 73% of those who expressed an interest in any listed mission. Habitat for Humanity's votes reflect 35% of total submissions, but well over half (56%) of those who chose anything from this list. Veteran's assistance (23), tutoring programs (18), Angel Tree programs (14) and environmental organizations/programs (12) also received some interest. A few people wrote-in various causes. Receiving one vote each they were: "Breaking down structural racism," "Alzheimer's Walk," "Bread for the World/Health without Frontiers," "Reading support" (this could be added to tutoring, but this person also checked that box), and "ECHO and Outreach Clinic[,] both in Brandon."

21. In which of the following ministries and activities are you MOST interested in participating during the coming year?" Participants were asked to choose up to five interests from a long list of activities that FPCB has available. We were attempting to see what respondents were the most passionate about; hence, the request to limit their response to only five. Some didn't follow the instructions well (as also happened with several other questions where we asked people to limit the number of choices); but in general, people chose the five or fewer activities they liked the most.

Not surprisingly, the activities that garnered the most "votes" are ones the church has been involved in for many years. "Meals on Wheels" topped the list at 39 votes, followed by "Heifer Project" (34), then "Meet and Eat" (31), and Adult Sunday School (30). "Family Promise" also had considerable support at 28 votes. Other popular programs and activities include "SAGE" (21), "Little Free Pantry" (20), Bible/book studies and "Three cents a meal/other special offerings" at 19 votes a piece, "Sunrisers prayer breakfast" (18), "RIP Medical Debt" (17), and Lay/Worship Leader (Reader)" (16). These last three are interesting, because not a lot of people are actually actively involved in them, but they obviously mean a LOT to the people who do them. SAGE is another one that doesn't have a lot of participants at any one time, but those who do attend SAGE events must think it a very worthwhile activity, since it received so many votes. There were several activities that received only a few votes. But most of those are very niche activities that only require a few people but can make a big difference. The Health Ministry is one; children's music ministry another, for example.

The ones I have a few concerns about – and this is just a general observation – are the number of votes for various youth activities (Faith Followers, VBS, Youth retreats, etc.), which seemed to be concentrated within a fairly small circle of respondents. My concern here is about the possibility of burn-out for some of these members. Obviously, respondents would not have checked so many of these activities if they weren't interested in them, but I have a little concern that the burden for making these things happen for our young people is not more widely shared. This might be an avenue for the discipleship team to explore at some point.

"Handbell Choir - Difficult to choose just 5. Would be helpful to divide list between internal and external activities."

"What is [Brandon HS Project]?"

"Homeless shower ministry" [Note: This is not a ministry we currently have. This probably should have been included as a comment in the previous question.]

“Church movements, e.g., CMF, CWF (Christian Men Fellowship, Christian Women Fellowship)” [Again, this is not a ministry/ministries we currently have. This is more properly part of Question 20 above.]

“Ushering, bread runner”

“Bringing food to families in our congregation during times of need, such as when a new baby has arrived, when a member is injured/ hospitalized, immediately after the death of a loved one. We do some of this, but I feel sure that some members are falling through the cracks. I would like to see this as part of a more deliberate program. This is part of why I marked that I was “unsure” in the earlier question about if FPCB is sensitive to the needs in our congregation.” [Note: Like some of the previous comments, FPCB does not have a formal program for this mission area, so, technically, it’s not an activity that we do as such. This comment more properly belongs with Question 20. However, the respondent makes an excellent point that, without a formal program, there may be members and families that are falling through the cracks. Please also note some of the discussion in Question 13 regarding how well FPCB takes care of its members who have major needs.]

“Adult/senior running group” [Again, more properly for Question 20 above.]

“Bell choir” (2)

22. Are there activities from the above list you believe are NOT important to the life of this church? Please list and say why.” This question received quite a few responses, but only a few were directly related to the question. Two people commented on the “3-cents a Meal” program. This program, one of the “Cents-Ability” hunger programs found in many Presbyterian churches, has been a staple of the Presbyterian faith for several decades. One respondent said they felt it was time for it to go, while another said we should keep it, but provide more marketing of where the funds go. Another person suggested that both the Beth-El Farmworker program and the Brandon High School project were inappropriate for our church. One person said the RIP Medical Debt, while a worthy program, was too big for a church our size to continue supporting. Another parishioner made a thoughtful general comment on the church’s many and varied causes and charities we support, saying, in effect, we are still trying to do the types of things that we used to do when we were a younger, bigger church. According to this person, it is too much, and takes away from the worship experience. On the other hand, another respondent cautioned against trying to winnow out various activities just because not a lot of people engage in them; all of these activities, this person said, are important to somebody in the church.

Several people also used this space to make general comments about the survey or in answer to previous questions where they had not had the opportunity to comment. One person noted their answer to a question did not show up on the PDF preview, and they wanted to make sure it got recorded correctly. I was able to see that the jotform had recorded the correct answer. That may have been a little glitch in the program; in manually entering answers recorded on paper forms into the jotform system, I, too, sometimes encountered Previews where a particular answer didn’t show, but was later seen to have been recorded correctly in the jotform chart.

“Keep 3 Cents/meal but provide more marketing of where the funds go.”

“[Y]es. 3 cents a meal. [T]oo much work for too few donations.”

“We have moved away – But – We (my wife and I) were very active from 2004 to 2016 and have many lifelong friends at FPCB - We are in our 80s so attendance in not very convenient - But - We are still members and give an offering every month to the church -.”

“I feel like our church does a lot. It is hard to not do things that we have always done, and change is hard, BUT I do think we are operating like a church that is trying to keep up with who we were 20 years ago. We are smaller and older. Younger families are busier and there aren't as many. I feel like we try to do EVERYTHING that we have always done and keep adding rather than eliminating. At times I feel I come to church and every Sunday I am asked to do something other than worship and enjoy in God.”

“This is just a general comment: I would like to sing the Gloria Patri in worship – at least occasionally.”

“I want to add a comment on the current problem that the chancel choir is not being listened to. We are placed behind the organ. We cannot see Sylvia. She can't see us. We aren't heard by the congregation. We are not comfortable with the placement of the piano and how we are being treated. I have been told that the sound does not reach the whole congregation. We feel we are being ignored and everyone else has a say except us.”

“Beth-El Farmworker. I believe it is more fitting for other churches near them, and of other faiths, to work with the Brandon High School. Children in our congregation attend a variety of high schools and can be helped in other ways.”

“I feel that the above list is inclusive of our church. I ask that you be careful when choosing what is not important to the life of the church. It might be important to [someone]. I could put a name of someone that it is important to for every one of these ministry activities.”

“RIP Medical Debt – a good ministry but we're too small a church to devote time and resources to it.”

“Thank you for the time and effort to ask opinions of the members of FPCB.”

Summary

My general feeling is that the survey was able to elicit some honest feedback from members of our congregation; and a lot of the feedback was – in general – pretty positive. Church members seem to be generally satisfied with most aspects of the worship experience: the worship time, the worship format (blended service), the sermons, etc. Members also seem to be generally satisfied with the mission areas and types of activities offered at FPCB. Members expressed appreciation for the pastor and a deep affection for their fellow parishioners. They are committed to each other and to this fellowship of believers.

There were a few concerns expressed about the music in the worship service. Most of those complaints were evenly divided between those who would prefer more praise music (or at least they wish there was less of the traditional music) and those who would prefer more hymns (or at least less of the praise music). Parishioners also seemed to feel the music was at times hit or

miss. “Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn’t.” Some of that may well be at least partly due to this “divide” as to what constitutes good music, praise or traditional. With a blended service, we may never be able to fully satisfy a majority of the congregation. But, there may be some tweaks that can be done, and are being worked on now, that can help our members have a deeper appreciation of a blended style of worship that includes both praise and traditional elements.

There were a few concerns expressed that we might be expecting too much from the congregation: too many “causes” that we want people to help with, too many requests for money. Too much for a church of our size and the age of our members. I do think that is a valid concern, and even if the majority of church members don’t seem to have an issue with most of these requests – and statistically they don’t appear to be very concerned with the majority of requests – we must still be sensitive to the fact that there are many in our number who are giving all they can, timewise, energy-wise, and money-wise. We must be judicious in our asking, and also make every member feel that their contribution, no matter how small, is BIG in the Kingdom of God.

This is currently a VERY active church, with a lot of mission opportunities and activities available. BUT, it is also what I would term a “mature” church, where the vast majority of members have been here for a very long time, and they are aging. At some point, without a significant infusion of younger blood, even a little younger blood, we will be unable to continue at the current pace of involvement. In my opinion, we are not there yet. The great majority of members still express great interest in actively participating in a variety of causes and activities. So long as we can continue to support these activities in a meaningful way, I believe most of these activities can continue for now.

Donuts and Discussion Comments

What's working well?	What could go?	What could we add/change?	What energizes us?	Sacred cows
One service	Maybe one less song	Need to improve [more?] ushers, greeters	Fellowship	Music program
Outreaches (MOW, Heifer, Stephen Ministry, Bible studies)	Sudden changes in traditional and contemporary music. Big opinions on this.	Follow up if someone dissatisfied	Opportunities to serve	Youth program
Like it [music] mixed up	Don't drag out music (# of verses/choruses)	Recognize visitors	Youth	Pastor Mike
Combination of 8:30 and 11:00 services	Get rid of [disposable] communion cups	Check on people who all of a sudden quit coming to church (ex: card, call, etc.)	Spicy sermons	Communion -- Can we go back to pre-COVID?
Brandon, our piano player (loves his job and shows it)	COVID way of doing communion	Buildings and grounds cleanup	Beginning music (non-traditional)	Bulletin -- Like to have one on paper
Friendly hospitality to visitors and others	The piano needs to be moved/revamp set-up for choir, etc.	Too much standing	Traditional music	Lord's Prayer
Support during loss	Too many verses for traditional hymns (limit to 3)	Like more traditional music	Involvement of children and youth	Small group ministries i.e., CUPIDS
Food/donut/coffee	Spirit Space	Miss the after-school programs on Wednesdays (things for youth and adults with a Wednesday night dinner)	Music	Bible study, Sunday School
Facilities' usage with community	Do not like gizmo COVID-era cups	Choir too far away from pianist	Mission outreach to community	Praise band
Church study	Two extra hymnal songs (2 praise, 2 choir) [??]	Want to go back to written bulletin	People/community	Mike (Pastor)
Womens Bible study	Disposable communion cups	Recognize "In Memory" for people who have given flowers	Family weekends at Cedarkirk	Parties
Mission driver	Organ	Add texting for messages	Fellowship	Kid activities
Not just one way	Styrofoam cups	Structure of music set-up, where the piano goes, etc.	Every age is valued	Cedarkirk
Church as a whole supports the youth fully	Eliminate a song (hymn or praise song). Alternate [them].	Survey answers don't all transfer to PDF	Sharing same value draws us back	Coffee
Michael as our leader	Special offerings to two. Presbyterians always being asked for money	REALM General profile	Support/joy with youth outreach	Children's message
Music ministry		Request paper copy of church directory	People of congregation	Mike's sermon
Prayer garden		Announcements on welcome screen at beginning of service	Roz's energy	Communion -- share the plates (takes more time) [?]
Ministries groups: MOW, Family Promise, 3 cents a meal		REALM Log-in [?]	Home/safety/Presbyterian tradition [?]	
When there's a loss -- all are supportive -- cards, notes, letters, literature are appreciated		Two services with traditional and praise	Music - choir	
Amount of music about right		Modify praise music [??]	Praise band	
Generally OK with blended service and understand that is what we need at this time		Have music [notes] on screen, not just lyrics with page #	Parties	
Mike's sermon		Soften drummer	Spirit Space	
Time of church		Would like to see better seating arrangement of choir (need to see Sylvia clearly and face congregation). Currently uncomfortable with set-up	Mike's sermon	
Praise band (more members needed)		Would like to see more new music from praise band	Book studies (Tuesday night)	
Parties		Would like more traditional hymns	Faith Followers acting, art	
Choir anthem, parting song		My worship should include Bible, hymnal in hand in order to worship properly.	Talent Show	
Spirit Space		Also passing of the [collection] plate.	Coffee	
Food, donuts and drinks		Prefers traditional communion with passing of the plate with elements	Help people who need it	
Glad we have one service		In Africa, we come the day before communion for a preparatory service	Music	
Children's program working well		I miss the Doxology	Fellowship	
Good collaboration and engagement		Under 2nd grade Faith Followers	Faithful Friends	
		Talent Show	Children are recognized -- bring them	
		Above 2nd grade to 6th grade Faith Followers (more interacting such as acting, art or games)		
		Same library ([need] update)		
		Music -- Don't need as much sometimes		
		Include more current events in prayers		
		Communion -- get back to a sense of connection		
		Streamline our offerings (rather than 4-5 different ones)		
		Use our physical Bibles more -- rather than just the projector		
		Limit the use of the projector		
		Raising awareness of 3 Cents a Meal		
		Making our missions (and why do we do them) understood		
		Greeters! [?]		
		Fear of burnout with the children's program		
		Youth! We want to see more visibility of youth		
		Make events more engaging		
		Opportunities for church-wide connection		

First Presbyterian Church of Brandon (FPCB) Church Survey

My attendance at FPCB

1. How long have you been a member of First Presbyterian Church of Brandon (FPCB)?	
<input type="radio"/> I am not a member of FPCB 14	<input type="radio"/> 5 – 20 years 33
<input type="radio"/> Less than 5 years 12	<input type="radio"/> More than 20 years 44
2. How frequently do you attend services (virtually and/or in person) at FPCB?	
<input type="radio"/> Weekly 89	<input type="radio"/> Occasionally 7
<input type="radio"/> 1 or 2 times a month 5	<input type="radio"/> I am a visitor 3
3. How active of a member/attendee are you at FPCB?	
<input type="radio"/> I attend service but am otherwise not involved in a lot of activities 15	<input type="radio"/> Moderately active – I have church friends and occasionally attend events 27
<input type="radio"/> I am somewhat active – I have made connections with other church members 12	<input type="radio"/> I am quite active – I have many church friends and often volunteer at events 49
4. Why is it important to YOU to attend a church? (Choose up to 3.)	
<input type="radio"/> To become closer to God 63	<input type="radio"/> To be part of a faith community 86
<input type="radio"/> To learn more about God and His Word 63	<input type="radio"/> To participate in service activities that are hard to find outside of a church 22
<input type="radio"/> So my children/family members will have a solid moral foundation 21	<input type="radio"/> Other (Please describe): _____ 2
<input type="radio"/> To become a better person 38	_____
5. Why do you attend FPCB in particular? (Choose up to 3.)	
<input type="radio"/> I find the sermons valuable 52	<input type="radio"/> I love the people at church 66
<input type="radio"/> I love the music at FPCB 28	<input type="radio"/> I've always been a Presbyterian and am comfortable with that 25
<input type="radio"/> To be honest, it's to please my family, spouse, or partner 4	<input type="radio"/> I believe in the missions and community services in which FPCB participates 41

<input type="radio"/> FPCB offers activities my children/ grandchildren/family members enjoy 11	<input type="radio"/> I love the Bible studies and Sunday School classes offered at FPCB. 17
<input type="radio"/> I like the worship style of FPCB 35	<input type="radio"/> It's a convenient distance to my home 14
<input type="radio"/> I enjoy participating in the activities offered at FPCB 21	<input type="radio"/> Other (Please describe): _____ 6 _____

My Thoughts on the Worship Service and the Church Itself

6. Does the worship music at FPCB resonate with you? (Do you like it?)	
<input type="radio"/> Yes. The music at FPCB helps me feel a deeper connection to God 42	<input type="radio"/> Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't 47
<input type="radio"/> Yes. It helps me feel more connected to the congregation 18	<input type="radio"/> I don't feel a connection to the worship music (Please say why): _____ 11 _____
7. Does the worship service as a whole resonate with you?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I usually love the weekly service 48	<input type="radio"/> The service doesn't really move me, but I attend for other activities I enjoy 1
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I enjoy the service most of the time 39	<input type="radio"/> I have not been happy with the service for quite a while, because (Please say why): 2 _____
<input type="radio"/> The service is sometimes hit or miss, but I come anyway 10	
8. Is the current worship service time (9:30 a.m.) good for you?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes 86	<input type="radio"/> No (A better time?): _____ 16 _____
9. Is the current worship format, one "blended" service with both praise and traditional elements, good for you?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes 80	<input type="radio"/> Yes, but there should be more services with different formats 12
<input type="radio"/> No (Please explain): _____ 14 _____	

10. Church office hours are currently 8:30 am - 1:30 pm Monday through Friday. In your opinion, do you feel:	
<input type="radio"/> The current hours are appropriate for a church of our size and mission 90	<input type="radio"/> The current hours need to be expanded to meet the needs of a church of our size and mission 6
11. What do you think of our church facility?	
<input type="radio"/> The building and grounds are good for a church of our size and mission 93	<input type="radio"/> The building and grounds are inadequate to meet the needs of a church of our size and mission 1
<input type="radio"/> Other (Please describe): _____ 8	

FPCB and Others

12. Do you feel FPCB is good at welcoming visitors?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I am relatively new and was warmly welcomed when I first started to attend 14	<input type="radio"/> Yes, in recent years, I have occasionally witnessed members welcome visitors 28
<input type="radio"/> Yes, in recent years, I have frequently witnessed members welcome visitors 54	<input type="radio"/> No, I have not seen visitors get a warm welcome at this church 1
13. Do you feel FPCB is sensitive to the major needs of congregants?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I've seen the church help people with real needs 53	<input type="radio"/> I'm unsure 27
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I've been the recipient of help from the church when I needed it 17	<input type="radio"/> No, I've experienced a major need, or seen others with major needs, and felt that nobody noticed 5
14. Do you feel FPCB attempts to address actual needs within the local community?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I feel FPCB is fully involved in the local community 34	<input type="radio"/> I feel FPCB doesn't understand the needs of the local community at all 6
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I feel the church tries to address many of the needs in the local community 60	<input type="radio"/> I feel FPCB should expend more effort on the spiritual needs of the congregation rather than the outside world 2
15. FPCB allows the FPCB Preschool and several outside groups (such as AA, Gamblers Anonymous and OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute)) to hold meetings or have activities inside our church facility. Do you believe this should be part of our mission?	

<input type="radio"/> Yes, I feel FPCB SHOULD allow these and other groups to have activities inside our facility as part of our mission 97	<input type="radio"/> I feel there are too many non-church groups, which interferes with church-specific activities that are also important 1
<input type="radio"/> I feel some of the groups using the church facilities are not the best mix for our church 3	<input type="radio"/> Are there other groups you believe we should encourage to use the facility? (Please list): _____ 5
16. Do you feel FPCB spends its budget on things that are important to fulfilling the church's missions and vision?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I feel the church budget reflects spending on things that really matter 67	<input type="radio"/> I would like to understand where FPCB spends its money, so I can feel more engaged in the initiatives 13
<input type="radio"/> I feel FPCB should be more careful in its spending 5	<input type="radio"/> So long as we are meeting our obligations, I am not worried about it 13
17. FPCB has a "backpack" campaign every summer to benefit the students at Beth-El. Would you like to continue with this campaign?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I think we should continue this campaign for the Beth-El ministry 83	<input type="radio"/> No, I think we should discontinue this type of ministry 6
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I think a backpack campaign is good, but would like our church to work with a different group 9	
18. FPCB has a Christmas campaign each year to benefit the families at Beth-El. Would you like to continue with this campaign?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I think we should continue this campaign for the Beth-El ministry 84	<input type="radio"/> No, I think we should discontinue this type of ministry 5
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I think a Christmas campaign is important, but would like our church to work with a different group 11	
19. Throughout the course of a year FPCB supports 4 special Presbyterian Offerings. How many would you support and which ones? (Please check all that you think are beneficial.)	

<input type="radio"/> One Great Hour of Sharing – supports disaster relief, Presbyterian hunger programs and self-development of people 90	<input type="radio"/> Peace and Global Witness – advocating for peace and justice locally and around the world 56
<input type="radio"/> Pentecost – building God’s household with children, youth and young adults 55	<input type="radio"/> Christmas Joy – Supports past and present church leaders and prepares the way for future leaders 61
20. Are there any causes or charities, specific or general, in which YOU think FPCB <u>should</u> be actively involved and which we currently are <u>not</u> ? (Please check ALL you would PERSONALLY participate in if it was offered. Add others not listed.)	
<input type="radio"/> Prison ministries 6	<input type="radio"/> Tutoring programs 18
<input type="radio"/> Habitat for Humanity 37	<input type="radio"/> Housing programs 8
<input type="radio"/> Immigrant ministries (beyond Beth-El) 8	<input type="radio"/> CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse), other anti-abuse organizations 3
<input type="radio"/> Feeding Tampa Bay 48	<input type="radio"/> Environmental organizations/programs 12
<input type="radio"/> Angel Tree programs 14	<input type="radio"/> Salvation Army Red Kettle ringers 5
<input type="radio"/> Veterans’ assistance 23	<input type="radio"/> Foster Care/Guardian ad Litem programs 6
<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/>

Activities I’m Personally Interested in Doing

21. In which of the following ministries and activities are you MOST interested in participating during the coming year? Choose <u>up to 5</u> such activities. Add other activities not listed that you do or would like to be able to do, so long as your total is no more than FIVE. We would like to know what you are MOST passionate about!	
<input type="radio"/> Lay/Worship Leader (Reader) 16	<input type="radio"/> Heifer Project 34
<input type="radio"/> Grief support groups (none currently) 1	<input type="radio"/> Liberty Manor (Veterans home) donations 8
<input type="radio"/> Adult Sunday School 30	<input type="radio"/> Little Free Pantry 20

<input type="radio"/> Bible/book studies 19	<input type="radio"/> RIP Medical Debt 17
<input type="radio"/> Faith Followers (Children's SS) 12	<input type="radio"/> VBS/Traveling Day Camp 15
<input type="radio"/> Faithful Friends (Monthly children's activities) 11	<input type="radio"/> 3 cents a meal/other special offerings 19
<input type="radio"/> Youth meetings (Middle and High school) 12	<input type="radio"/> Stephen Ministry 12
<input type="radio"/> Youth retreats/mission trips 12	<input type="radio"/> Couples' groups (like CUPIDS) 12
<input type="radio"/> Meet and Eat 31	<input type="radio"/> Health ministry 4
<input type="radio"/> Meals on Wheels 39	<input type="radio"/> Building/property maintenance 11
<input type="radio"/> Family Promise 28	<input type="radio"/> OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) classes through USF 6
<input type="radio"/> SAGE (Senior Adults Giving Everywhere) events. 21	<input type="radio"/> Childrens music ministry 4
<input type="radio"/> Beth-El Farmworker ministry/projects 9	<input type="radio"/> Chancel choir 5
<input type="radio"/> Singles' groups 7	<input type="radio"/> Praise Band/Praise Ensemble 4
<input type="radio"/> Brandon High School Project 12	<input type="radio"/> 8
<input type="radio"/> Sunrisers prayer breakfast 18	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Lay visitation ministry 5	<input type="radio"/>
22. Are there activities from the above list you believe are NOT important to the life of this church? Please list and say why.	
<input type="radio"/> 11	<input type="radio"/>