

CONGREGATIONAL CONVERSATION RESPONSES – A SUMMARY

AUGUST 1, 2021

Thank you to all who participated in a beautiful time of fellowship at our all-church brunch and Congregational Conversation on August 1. We hope this time of dialogue and discernment supported your thinking about where God is calling us as a church.

We have reviewed and synthesized the many responses gathered during the meeting. We have prepared a summary of the responses which is outlined below. For those of you who would like to read further and review all the responses, you can find the raw data here: [AUG 1 CONG CONV RESPONSES](#).

Any questions please reach out to any of us on the Transition Team:

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WHAT DID YOU HEAR THAT CONCERNS OR INTERESTS YOU?

The most common response to this question was about decline. We heard loud and clear that our church is in decline as are most of the churches across the country: “1/3 of churches [will] not [be] here in 10 years”. The second most common response related to “being a catalyst for God’s love” and the importance of mission: “Focus on mission to improve things” and “Look and listen to community needs, then follow them to help.” In addition, the survey responses about low satisfaction and low energy emerged as a concern: “The survey results about satisfaction made me feel both validated in the feelings I have been having, and also concerned about how we let it get to this point.” Other concerns or interests included trust and transparency, gospel focus, age of our congregation, concern about lack of young people and families, and the low score on hospitality.

WHAT ABOUT THE VISION THEMES RESONATE WITH YOU AND INSPIRE YOU?

The themes that resonated the most were the themes about being a Catalyst for God’s love and Building the Body. Some of the representative comments are:

- Catalyst for God’s love
 - “We need to focus on mission and serving people as God wants us to do.”
 - “With Matthew 25, we have started what we seem to believe we need.”
 - “Helping those in the community with (spiritual, physical, and mental) needs.”
 - “Service to one another and to those outside of the walls of our church in ways that are humble and unassuming.”

- Building the Body
 - “Build community within congregation”
 - “Building the body as a learning and community building focus is great”
 - “Being focused on welcoming all lifestyles and ages”
 - “That First Presbyterian is a place that exudes unassuming love...that [people] feel unconditional acceptance, love that feebly attempts to mimic the love God shows”

The other theme that emerged from the answers to this question is the need for change. These themes cannot just reinforce the current state, but need to be a starting point for significant change to shift the decline.

- “That it is possible to refocus - more upward”
- “We need to change our thinking/comfort zone”
- “I’m excited to be a part of the future of the church and re-inventing who we are and what we need to be”

WHAT TRAITS AND QUALITIES DO WE NEED IN OUR NEXT SENIOR PASTOR TO ACCOMPLISH THE VISION OF OUR FUTURE?

There were a wide variety of answers to this question. Two of the most common answers aligned with the two theme that emerged from the identity question above.

- Catalyst for God’s love
 - “Mission-minded”
 - “Outward mission-focused”
 - “Commitment to Missions”
- Building the Body
 - “Someone who wants to know people deeply”
 - “Very approachable”
 - “Someone who is engaging, friendly, that interacts with all the aspects and different age groups”

Other common themes included being a strong speaker/preacher, being younger, ability to build trust and being inclusive. A few people suggested specific demographics beyond age, with suggestions for both male and female offered.

There were many other traits listed, and the full list will be provided to the PNC for their consideration.