



Mission Study **Report**

First United Presbyterian Church
Belleville, IL

September, 2011

***First United Presbyterian Church
Mission Study Report
September 2011***

Introduction

Times of transition between installed pastors in a church provide a rich opportunity to assess where a church has been, where it is, and where it believes God is leading it. The Rev. Dr. Greg Stovell left his position as pastor/head of staff at the First United Presbyterian Church in late 2010, accepting a call to serve a church in Pennsylvania. In the months just before he left, Eric Bigalke arrived to take the position as organist and choir director here. Youth Director Kris Schondelmeyer had left to assume an ordained position at a church in Toledo, OH. Several other significant changes had occurred in the life of First United Presbyterian Church by this time, including a multitude of staff transitions during the preceding decade, an in-depth long-range planning process, and the subsequent building of a large addition onto the existing facility.

The Session contracted with the Rev. Conley A. Zomermaand to provide interim pastoral service beginning in January 2011. Staff transitions continued apace, most significantly the departure of associate pastor Alexandra Hendrickson, who accepted a call to a church in Pennsylvania. The primary foci of the first few months of Pastor Zomermaand's tenure were restoring a sense of stability in the face of multiple transitions and the completion of the addition to the facility. By midyear, a Mission Study Team was identified and appointed, and began to meet regularly to assemble information, seek input from the congregation, and write a mission study report in line with Presbytery requirements and expectations of a congregation seeking new pastoral leadership. Those members were grateful for all the work previously undertaken by the various groups in First United Presbyterian Church that provided much relevant information that lightened their workload as they moved ahead to prepare a mission study for review by the Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery.

The Mission Study Team has been working for several months to research and write this document. It is their hope and intention that it is an accurate presentation of the history and the present nature of First United Presbyterian Church, as well as a vision of the congregation's hopes for its future. This work is offered to the Session and to the Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) that will be established, to inform and guide them in the important work they are about to undertake. The Mission Study Team stands ready to assist the PNC, to understand and interpret the work in this report so that its successors in this endeavor may fulfill their responsibilities in a godly and timely manner.

The Mission Study Team:

Doug Bridges

Jen DeJong

Shawn Lankford

Ed Langen

Chuck Thurig

Emily Wilson

Conley Zomermaand, Interim Pastor

I. Assessment of Vitality

People, Resources, and the Life of the Church – What’s happening now, and who is involved? The easy answer to this question is “A lot of things are happening at First United!” There are programs and activities for almost everyone who walks through the doors. We are blessed with a large building that has many flexible activity/meeting spaces, a gymnasium, park area, and even a baseball diamond. Members and non-members alike participate in activities that feed them in many ways. There are groups in the ministry areas of music and arts, Christian education, fellowship, and prayer/support. We have a vibrant Music and Arts program that includes: the Chancel Choir, Prime Chime, United Bells, knitting and quilters. Christian Education programs include: Sunday school, children (PYC), youth groups (KIX and TIM), Men’s Bible Study, Faith in Fiction, and a well stocked library. Fellowship programs include Friends Dine Out, Presbyterian Women circles, Mariner and other fellowship groups. Prayer/support programs include Prayer Chain, Prayer Quilters, Prayer Shawl, Loaves and Fishes, Stephen Ministry, and service groups. A walkers program, softball and volleyball teams provide opportunities for group exercise for all skill levels. Members actively serve the church on boards and committees like Session, Deacons, Trustees, Ushers, and many more.

Congregational Demographics—2010

<u>Membership</u>	<u>Changes in 2010:</u>	<u>Age Distribution:</u>
Total Active: 763	Gains: 21	Under 25: 133
	Losses: 30	26-45: 179
	Baptisms: 13	46-55: 95
		56-65: 255
		Over 65: 101

Average Worship Attendance:

Chapel (8:00):	60
Sanctuary (10:30):	220

Both worship service tend to be traditional in style and format. The Chapel service is slightly more traditional, though it can also be less formal and more interactive because of its smaller venue. We are not afraid to blend in elements from many styles and traditions in both services. There was a third contemporary worship service that was discontinued in 2007 after a period of seven years.

(Average Worship Attendance, cont.)

Year	Total Membership	Worship Attendance	Christian Education Enrollment
2000	919	300	218
2001	941	350	380
2002	870	350	402
2003	865	307	441
2004	852	295	202
2005	858	303	281
2006	869	320	276
2007	849	325	354
2008	776	318	393
2009	772	285	366
2010	763	280	254

Financial Report 2010

Total Budget:	805,942
Receipts:	638,649 (tithes and offerings) 309,546 (Capital Building Fund) 15,173 (investment income) 19,748 (other income)
Expenditures:	520,212 (local program) 58,420 (local mission) 376,608 (capital expenditures) 79,395 (investment expenditures) 20,150 (per capita apportionment) 90,576 (validated mission) 3,500 (Theological Education Fund) 3,050 (other mission)

Condition of the Building

The building that currently houses First United began as the home of First Presbyterian Church of Belleville in 1963. That congregation built what is now known as the Chapel, Vista Room, Eversull Hall, the Library, and some of the existing classroom and office spaces. Four major expansions have since been added on to the building: a gymnasium/stage/multi-purpose room, a large modern Sanctuary in the early 1980's, a music suite in the late 1990's; and, most recently in 2011, a two story addition that includes a covered entrance, a dedicated Children's Chapel, a fellowship space just outside the Sanctuary, new youth spaces, office spaces, and a kitchenette/ coffee preparation area. The large parking lot outside of this new entrance was extensively repaired. The facility is presently adequate for the congregation's needs, presently and in the near future.

The church grounds includes a multi-acre green space with a softball diamond, a picnic pavilion, an outdoor worship area, and two large storage buildings, one of which houses the church's two buses (18- and 24-passenger capacity).

The church has had a number of housekeeping and grounds keeping staff over the years but it's been a struggle to keep up with 10 acres of ground and 10,000 square feet (now 18,000 square feet) of internal building. The older parts of the building have begun to show their age, some old worn asbestos tile floors are dingy, some ceiling tiles are stained. The Trustees, however, are leading an effort that has cleaned and repaired of many of the older sections of the building. We are currently troubleshooting a leaking area of flat roof and trying to find the source of periodic water leakage in the elevator equipment room near Eversull Hall.

II. Assessment of our Surrounding Community

A great deal has changed in our surrounding community in the past 15 or 20 years. Belleville and the Metro-East communities have all increased in population. The median household income level and overall level of education has also increased. The St. Louis area continues to grow and improve financially, culturally, and educationally, and it is still a very important Midwestern hub for many business and industrial ventures.

The focus of this report will be on the 5 mile radius area around our church and how this area compares to national averages. However, one must take into consideration that we are primarily a commuter church with a large number of members coming from even outside this 5 mile radius. The boundaries of this circle are as follows; North- 1 ½ miles above the intersection of 159 and I64, East- almost to Shiloh, South- 1 mile below 159 and 15, and West- ½ mile west of 15 and 157. **Note:** This 5 mile area is outside of Scott Air Force Base and their inclusion may have had a significant impact on the following results.

People and Places

The population of our study area is almost 110,000. This is an increase of almost 2% from 1990. However, during that same period the U.S. grew by over 23%. Our projected growth during the next five years is more than seven times less than the projected national average of 5%. These numbers can have a direct correlation on our ability to increase membership and thus increase contributions to the church.

Faces of Diversity

The overall level of diversity in the study area is classified as extremely high. This classification is based on the number of different life styles and racial/ethnic groups. As the area becomes more complex and challenging, new member recruitment can become more difficult.

There are 36 of the defined 50 U.S. lifestyles in our area with over 50% being represented by middle class American families. Anglos are represented at over 70%, followed by African-Americans at 24%. The number of Hispanics is 8 times less than the national average.

Of the six age groups that represent major generations, the largest in our area is Survivors (29-49 year olds) at 29% followed by Boomers (50-67 year olds) at 21%. These percentages are on par with national averages and generally comprise the core of income earners.

The family structure in our area is somewhat non-traditional due to the below average presence of married persons and two-person families. This could also affect the potential for new members.

Educationally, this area is on par with most U.S. categories including 28% high school graduates, 14% college graduates, and 35% with some college, almost 10% over the U.S. average. Thus, the level of education in our area should not be a hindrance to membership recruitment.

Community Issues Details

In spite of what you may read in the daily paper, this study area's level of stress is somewhat low when compared to national averages. This is indicated by noting that the area is below average in the characteristics known to contribute to community problems such as households below the poverty line, low education, or high incidences of family problems.

Most of the household concerns are in the hopes and dreams area which is high on the hierarchy of concerns. Spiritual/Personal is the only category in this area that is higher and the two combined represent over 45% of households.

When folks are not overly concerned with basic survival needs they may be more inclined to join and participate in organized religious programs. This represents a positive potential for membership recruitment.

However, the overall age, lifestyle and racial/ethnic diversity of our area are above the U.S. averages. Thus, based on the assumption that as a group becomes older and more diverse the potential for resistance to change becomes more significant, the areas potential for resistance is likely to become somewhat high. This becomes a membership recruitment detriment.

Faith Preferences Details

All the aforementioned information brings us to the final study area of faith potential. Overall faith involvement and preferences for historic Christian religious affiliations is somewhat high in our area. Those somewhat involved, 32%, are above the national average. Those strongly involved, are just slightly below the U.S. average at 33%. However there are over 35% of households that are not involved with any organized religion.

The average household income in our area, over \$61,000 per year, is about \$8,000 below the U.S. average. Only 32% of these households contribute more than \$500 per year to churches (less than \$10 a week).

Traditional and contemporary religious preferences comprise the overall church style preferred by over 53% of households in our area. Almost 60% of these families prefer church programs that focus on community/social services and recreation. These include church sponsored day-school, food pantry/clothing resources, twelve-step programs and camping programs.

While 82% of the religious households favor "Historic Christian Groups," only 4% express a Presbyterian preference. This is below the national Presbyterian preference of almost 5%.

Note: The afore mentioned information in part 2 was distilled from View 2010 reports and the Percept Group. This report defines our neighborhood and the potential of membership recruitment within the 5 mile area.

III. Sense of God's call towards the Future

History

First United Presbyterian Church was formed by the merger of First Presbyterian Church of Belleville and First Presbyterian Church of East St. Louis in the spring of 1982. The history of both these churches dates to the mid-1800's. Prior to the merger the Belleville congregation moved to the church's current location in 1963.

The Rev. Fred Roblee, interim, guided the East St. Louis Church into the merger. First United Presbyterian Church completed a 600-seat sanctuary in 1982. The new congregation was served by Co-Pastors Rev. Fred M. Cornell and Rev. James A. Capps. The congregations were officially merged on May 30, 1982. On August 31, 1983, Rev. Capps left the congregation and Rev. Cornell resumed the position of Senior Pastor. The Rev. Blythe Denham was called as Associate Pastor in 1982 and the Rev. Andrew Kramer was called as a second Associate Pastor in 1985. Rev. Cornell retired in May 1988. On January 6, 1991, the congregation called Rev. Gary Looman as its new Senior Pastor. On October 1, 1994, the Rev. Blythe Denham Kieffer left to accept a call to a St. Louis area church.

After 12 years as the Senior Pastor of First United, the Rev. Gary Looman retired from the ministry on June 27, 2003. The Rev. Elizabeth Rolf Kanerva was hired as Interim Head of Staff and began her ministry on October 27, 2003. On December 31, 2003, the Rev. Andrew Kramer left First United to accept a call as Senior Pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Belleville.

The Rev. Elizabeth Dick served as the Interim Associate Pastor from May 2006 until April 2007. The Rev. Greg Stovell served as Senior Pastor from September 2005 until October 2010. The Rev. Alex Hendrickson served as Associate Pastor from May 2007 until June 2011. Today, First United Presbyterian Church is served by the Rev. Conley A. Zomermaand who was hired as Interim Head of Staff in January, 2011.

Beliefs and Values

The Session of First United Presbyterian Church adopted a medium/long range plan in December, 2006 that centered on the areas of worship, Christian education, use of space, community, care, mission and leadership structure. Based on this strategic plan, called *Vision 2007*, the church vision statement became:

“We are a church called to feed the hungry.”

This is meant that the church was focusing on meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of hungry people in the congregation, in the community, and around the world. This planning process resulted in many tangible changes in church life. It led to the re-formulation of the associate pastor’s role as it related to pastoral care and small group development within the congregation. The Sunday morning schedule changed to allow for a stand-alone education hour between two services, rather than being offered at the same time as a now-discontinued third worship service. A number of new small groups were initiated alongside the numerous previously-existing small groups. Plans were made to raise a significant sum of money to build and addition that would enlarge the cramped Narthex, provide additional office space, and add a much larger youth area. The addition was completed in May, 2011 and is gradually being used for the purposes for which it was intended.

The *Vision 2007* process was extremely helpful in the development of the present mission study report. This mission study team appreciates and endorses the work done and the goals outlined in *Vision 2007*.

Theological Perspectives

First United Presbyterian Church, Belleville, IL, resides slightly to the right-hand side of the conservative/liberal theological spectrum, though individual members of the congregation are found all along that range. First United views people, church, and world from a mostly traditional, biblical perspective. We are not “old-fashioned” and “stodgy.” We believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God that teaches everything one needs to know for faith and life, as individuals and as a congregation. Our congregants are not generally literalists who argue over original languages. They do believe, however, that through prayer, study, and Divine inspiration, God’s will comes alive in their lives as they examine and apply God’s Word. The Bible teaches that God is known as Father/Creator of and Provider for the world, as Jesus Christ, God’s Son, our Savior, and as Holy Spirit, active and at work in our lives, in the church, and in the world. We believe that all followers of Jesus Christ are exhorted and empowered to live out their faith on a daily basis in all aspects and activities.

First United appreciates and lives by a solidly traditional theological point of view that is encapsulated in the foundational theological perspectives and practices of the PCUSA. They are proudly Presbyterian, even as they struggle with what that means from a denominational, connectional point of view. First United does not focus on “hot-button” theological and social issues, preferring rather to discern what it means to be a biblically based, God-honoring, Christ-following, Spirit-empowered body of disciples in Belleville, IL, in the early 21st Century. There is no theological or social litmus test for admission or participation, though there are still influences from being a church of more-educated, upwardly mobile types who have provided leadership in the community in the past. Questions are asked about how the church can be more open and welcoming to others, especially of the residents in the immediate surrounding community. That is a discussion surely to continue under and with the leadership of new pastoral staff.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Mission Study Team has reviewed previous mission studies and other documents assessing ministries of the church and has listened to feedback from church members. The following list of challenges might be considered obstacles to moving the church forward if not addressed in the near future.

Staff Dependency- One of the most glaring challenges that First United Presbyterian Church must face is the dependency it puts on staff. In the 2007 Vision document, four out of the first five strengths listed were staff. In most instances, when a program at the church has stopped or a ministry has ended it is because the staff person in charge has left. Staff presence and leadership are important and necessary for a church to thrive. However, when a church places dependency on the staff to do the ministry without the adequate partnership of lay leaders, it is less likely to build sustainable programs beyond the staff’s tenure. The team believes that a better balance needs to be established between the vital efforts of the staff and the valuable contributions of the congregation.

Developing Member Leaders- The current type of volunteers active in the church tend to fall in to one of two categories: superstars and helpers. The superstars have been running programs for years and are involved in multiple facets of the church, carrying more weight than a volunteer should. The helpers are a necessary part of the ministry but don’t have any “heavy lifting” responsibilities. For the church to move away from a staff dependent mindset there will need to be a shift away from superstars (who tend to burnout) and helpers to partners in ministry. Member leaders need to be developed who see staff as their support and provide them with resources needed while they take on an appropriate amount of responsibility for their ministry area. There can also be a significant economic cost savings by using member leaders instead of paid part or full time staff.

Financial Giving- It is not surprising given the economic climate of our country that church general giving is down. However, the church’s vitality depends on the financial support of its church members. Since 2007 there has been a decrease in giving by approximately 15%. This shortfall has been offset to some degree by the generous response of the congregation to the capital funds campaign. Additionally, the percentage of pledged payments has been high.

Finally, expenses have been lowered in 2011, though part of that savings was in the area of mission giving which causes a degree of unhappiness among the membership.

Membership- For the past five years, First United Presbyterian Church has lost more members (due to death, transfers, deactivating membership) each year than new members gained. In 2010, 21 new members were received while 30 members were lost. Over the past 10 years, the membership has gradually declined from just over 900 to the current membership of 763. We also recognize that while that is our official active membership number, actual active participation is somewhat lower. Session has been engaged in a process of bringing our actual numbers into agreement with reality. On the “good news” side, we have not decreased in numbers to the same degree as other congregations have decreased. However, we probably were never quite as large as we thought we were either. We also have a sizable contingent of younger members and younger families. Our membership, though smaller, is committed to the ministry of the church and rich in the resources essential to moving the ministry ahead in the years to come.

Engaging Members- Currently there is not an intentional process for new members to become involved in the life of the church after the new member class. It would be quite easy for a new member to join the church and then never become engaged in the church beyond worship on Sunday morning. This area of concern was mentioned recently during our discussions with the congregation. It seems that there is a small group of very committed, overextended volunteers (some who have been members for decades) in different ministries of the church. There are many opportunities for church members to get involved and more church members who could become more actively involved. There is a need, for our somewhat disjointed system of mentoring new participants, to become more intentional and organized.

Mission Minded- “We are a church called to feed the hungry.” Our vision statement calls for us to go out and feed those who are physically, emotionally, and spiritually hungry. The children and youth are involved in local mission projects throughout the year, Presbyterian Women collect food monthly, there are work days in neighboring communities, and the adults take an annual mission trip each fall. However, these groups represent a small sample of the 763 members of First United Presbyterian Church. The desire to be mission minded, while very prominent in recent congregational surveys, does not yet seem to be a centerpiece of the culture of the church.

Intergenerational Events- There is a desire by families with children to have more interaction with other families within the church. Currently there are few offerings for families to gather together outside of Sunday morning worship.

Recent Congregational Input

Our recent meeting sessions with the congregation have validated and revealed what they presently feel about our church. Many of their thoughts and concerns are consistent with issues mentioned, discussed, and acted upon over the numerous studies and reports of the past 20 years. While that's a validation that most of our course was clear, there are still many issues that need our attention and rectification. What follows are compilations of congregational responses to the specific questions asked during the recent gatherings.

What is God's purpose for this church?

We are Gods' people, called to grow spiritually as disciples of Jesus Christ through worship, learning, fellowship, and service. With guidance of the Holy Spirit, we seek to follow the great commandment to "love our neighbor as ourselves", as we use our talents, our time, and our resources to serve God's people; in our congregation, in our community, and around the world.

What is God calling us to do?

We are a church "Called to feed the hungry." We are a church made up of members that feel the presence of God in our lives and have a strong commitment to Christian ideals and beliefs. We want to become a stronger community of faith, that sets the example, and to be more Christ like. We want to pursue Christian discipleship, especially with young people. We want to be the best, active Church members we can be, willing to work together for ours and future generations. We want to be more involved in our local community, with missions, away and at home, and with schools, food banks, and nursing care. We want to welcome new members, and to be a more open and friendlier church. We want to minister to the community and be more comforting and supportive. We want to be good stewards of the earth and our church. We want to be a responsible congregation, with good follow through, and complete/focused programs. Finally, we want to develop a better informed church.

Who is our neighbor?

Our neighbors exist in a wide variety of social, cultural, and physical realms. Our neighbors are everywhere in the world, in our immediate church family, and everywhere in between those areas. Our recent surveys portrayed a need to reexamine our outreach and refocus attention to our local community. While it's fine to support Kindercottage in East St Louis, and overseas missions, there are also many areas to serve right here in Belleville, at First United, and in the immediate surrounding area. Paying attention to the needs of our church facility and grounds, as well as refocusing on Belleville's "Neighbors for Renewal" are examples of recent attempts to satisfy that request.

(Reference the "Assessment of our Surrounding Community" area in section II of this report for detailed demographic and social information in a 5 mile radius around our church)

With whom is God calling us to be active in mission and ministry?

With the exception of staff concerns, the mission area was the highest rated area of concern. Our congregation wants to focus on mission and specifically minister more to our immediate community. However, over 20 years ago the Session of our church adopted a goal of increasing the annual mission budget by a rate of 1% of the previous year's general fund budget until the General assembly goal of 20% is met by the year 2000. Sadly, our present 2011 mission budget is less than the 8% it was in 1990. As previously mentioned, the determination to actually be mission minded is not yet a reality in the culture of our church.

While we need to continue offering the wide variety of mission programs the church supports, the emphasis on more support to our local area may mean we refocus some funds and efforts closer to First United Presbyterian Church. Many mission areas supported by our church come from outside the direct mission area of the budget. Many other groups like Presbyterian Women, the Mariners groups, the Deacons, and various circle groups, support a wide variety of additional missions, ministries and charities. The church is not aware of all of these offerings and could improve communication of all the offerings provided.

In addition to being mission minded, our church has a desire to be more focused on and dedicated to the youth of the church. Our congregation wants to provide spiritually engaging programs to youth while also providing them with a fun and safe place. There is a desire to see youth more involved in worship, in leadership, and in service opportunities. In an effort to put more emphasis on the youth ministry, the church recently hired a full time youth director. Prior to this new hire there were seven youth leadership transitions in the past 10 years. The youth ministry has not experienced a strong sense of stability and has not had the ability to gain any significant momentum. The church needs to examine what might have contributed to the previous seven leadership transitions in the last 10 years in order to break the trend and provide a more sustainable model for the youth ministry.

IV. What type of pastoral leadership should we be seeking?

In light of all the previously discussed information, what type of pastoral leadership should we be seeking? (Full-time, part-time call, supply, commissioned Lay pastor, or co-pastor)

As previously stated, our membership is committed to the ministry of the church and is rich in the resources essential to moving the ministry ahead in the future. While the overall size of our congregation declined, we do have a good mix of younger families that we need to keep engaged and involved. We need a pastor who can help us increase membership and reenergize our church. We are seeking a full-time pastor and would be open to co-pastors.

What qualities, characteristics and skills should the Pastor Nominating Committee be looking for in the next pastoral leader?

While we want an experienced pastor, we don't want one who comes here to retire. We want an exuberant pastor who can help our church grow. One who devotes themselves to shepherding the spiritual lives of our congregation? They must be interested in the pastoral care of our congregation. Our new pastor must be dynamic and effective in preaching and with all aspects of worship. The congregation has expressed a desire to establish a long term pastoral relationship. We believe this concern comes from the volatility of our staff, especially during the past years. They must have effective leadership skills, especially as head of staff. We want a pastor who cultivates and nurtures the staff as well as the congregation.

We want a compassionate and caring pastor who can minister to all the needs of our Church. The pastor must also be an effective communicator who can facilitate and harmonize with all the various groups within the Church. They must be sincere and personable in their dealings with others and have inspiring interpersonal skills that can relate to all ages of our congregation. The pastor must also be able to effectively work with and relate to our community outside of the church. They must be dedicated and committed to the mission works of the Church. The pastor needs to be supportive of the priorities of our church, specifically missions and youth ministry, whether that means their participation in those programs or just being supportive of the lay leaders and staff overseeing those areas.

Pastors with all these traits seem to become the most beloved. They are the ones who you would comfortably turn to in both joyous and trying times. Hopefully, this kind of pastor will inspire and empower our congregation to accomplish a greater ministry than we have achieved in the past.

V. Issues to work on until the new pastor is in place

A few items come to mind when we consider what First United Presbyterian Church needs to accomplish in the remaining time of this interim period.

1. The church has a long, proud, successful ministry. As with any history, not all of it is wonderful. Any interim pastor who spends too much time prodding a congregation to "come to terms with its history" stands in danger of being accused of focusing too much on the past. Yet, some discussion of past issues in the life of First United and its predecessor congregations needs to occur, specifically around the subject of relocation to the Royal Heights Road location, merger with the E. St. Louis congregation, and various staff transitions and the reasons for them. This discussion will not focus on the details of decisions, especially if they were wise or unwise, but on how those decisions have contributed to the molding of the church into the body it is today.
2. Several key facilities issues need to be addressed. First, we have not moved into and adjusted to the use of the addition completed recently. Figuring out how best to use this wonderful space will take the better part of a year. Significant repairs and upgrades are required on the older section of the building. Volunteers have stepped up to complete a number of cleaning and minor repair issues. Several others, including high-dollar value projects remain, from dealing with roofing matters, flooding in Eversull Hall, and replacing worn-out carpet and flooring, require a unified plan. Additionally, how to clean and maintain the larger facility is an issue of highest priority.

3. A second capital funds campaign needs to be designed and ready for implementation by the end of the first campaign (June, 2012). The first campaign managed to cover approximately one-half the cost of the addition. A second effort would shorten the amount of time necessary to pay off the remainder of the price tag, in addition to saving significantly on the financing costs to the congregation.
4. While the congregation knows it will be searching for a pastor to serve as head of staff, additional discussion needs to focus on the make-up of the remainder of the staff. First United Presbyterian Church is not as large as it used to be, and probably was never as large as it thought it was. The present reality is that the size and shape of the staff in the future will be different from past models, including the most recent one.
5. More members of the congregation will be required to step up and take ownership of more of the ministries of the church. The congregation has become somewhat accustomed to paying staff and expecting officers to carry out much of the work of the body. In light of what is said above, the congregation needs to come to terms with the fact that it needs to be less staff- and officer-focused (elders, deacons, trustees) and more member-focused.
6. Last, but arguably most importantly, the congregation needs to re-imagine what it means to be “a church called to feed the hungry.” The feeders of the hungry need first of all to feed and be fed themselves. In other words, members of the congregation need to wrestle with what it means always to be growing as disciples of Jesus Christ, alive and at work in the church and in the world. Whenever there is a transition in community life, anxiety abounds. The challenge is not to be consumed by that anxiety but to allow it to prompt disciples to experience seasons of new understanding and growth in their communal life.