

**Federated Church**

**Mission Study Report**

**October 2020**

## INTRODUCTION

In January 2020, Federated Church President Marcia Grant, on behalf of the Governing Council, issued a call for persons interested in serving on a Mission Study Committee. Eight members responded to the call: Julie Graham, Steve Heinisch, John McClure, Dave Melick, Lisa Perrin, Ashli Porter, Doug Williams, and Marv Zoucha. Williams and Zoucha were appointed as Co-chairs and Melick as Secretary. Beginning on February 11, a total of 14 committee meetings have been held. Due to health concerns resulting from the Covid-19 virus, many of the meetings were held via Zoom technology.

## METHODOLOGY

The Mission Study Committee began its work by reviewing its responsibilities with Pastor Edward and President Grant. A Mission Study is a process to determine both who we are as a church and how we are to serve the community into the future. While typically used to determine and communicate the characteristics desired in a new pastor, it also serves to establish strategic priorities for congregations in which quality pastoral leadership already exists. Co-chairs Williams and Zoucha shared a summary of the process for committee discussion. The Mission Study process is intended to take from 4 months to 2 years in length, and congregation involvement and input is important. The process may involve surveys of the congregation, a study of community demographics and perceptions regarding the church, and small- and/or large-group congregation meetings. A number of documents pertinent to conducting a mission study provided by Pastor Edward from both The Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ were reviewed. These documents included:

- A Guide for Churches Entering Into an Interim Time
- On Calling a Pastor
- Guidelines for Mission Studies from the Committee on Ministry
- Mission Study Guide for Congregations
- Be the Church
- Mission Study Design Guide: Data Gathering for Ministry

Committee member Heinisch provided a thorough review of the Strategic Plan developed in 2011 and offered suggestions for how that document could be helpful to the Mission Study Committee. It is this Strategic Plan from which the current 4 pillars of Federated Church were developed:

- Becoming a Community of Disciples
- Reaching Out to the Community
- Bridging Generations
- Growing the Church

While these “pillars” have been referred to during the past 9 years, they have not been used consistently for direction and goal-setting.

Members of the Mission Study Committee then turned their attention to determining how best to gather information from Federated members regarding their perceptions of the Church.

Committee members reviewed a number of “canned” surveys regarding churches, and each member developed a list of suggested congregation survey questions which were then categorized. During discussion of this information, McClure suggested simplifying the process by asking congregation members to respond to one question: “What are the five most important needs you expect Federated Church to meet for you and your family’s faith journey? Please be specific.” The Mission Study Committee adopted this approach and McClure and Perrin drafted communication to the congregation about this data gathering approach and the message was approved by the Committee.

The survey was provided to Federated members in a variety of formats intended to reach all in the congregation and to allow all who wished to do so to respond in the format most comfortable to them. Surveys were provided both electronically as well as in hard copy. Perrin set up the survey using Survey Monkey for those wishing to respond online. Zoucha worked with church staff to get the Survey Monkey link published on the Federated Church website and in church bulletins and newsletters. Church staff and committee members Heinisch, Williams, and Zoucha worked to send the surveys to all Federated members through the US Postal Service, with a copy of the survey for each member of the family included. A total of 40 electronic responses and 44 hard copy responses were received. These included a small number of responses submitted after the suggested response date because the Committee wanted to factor in all responses. The Mission Study Committee discussed this return rate and determined that sufficient responses had been received from which to determine current perceptions of Federated Church from its members. A summary of the responses received is attached to this report as an appendix.

## RESULTS

With the congregation survey responses, Mission Study Committee members then worked individually to categorize the responses into themes. Discussion of this categorization followed over the course of a few meetings. Heinisch provided a tally of responses which was helpful to this process. The Committee settled on 5 themes which resulted from committee members’ categorization of expectations received from congregation members. These themes are:

- Spiritual Growth
- Fellowship
- Missions
- Community of Faith and Compassion
- Worship

Fleshing out each of those themes with examples of responses was the next task undertaken by the Committee. Below are those themes and expectations:

### **Federated Church is expected to provide Spiritual Growth through:**

- Bible-based sermons
- Bible study groups
- Educational programs for all, preschool through elderly
- Emotional support/prayer chain

**Federated Church is expected to provide Fellowship in ways such as:**

- Fellowship groups and activities within the church and in the community
- Building relationships and providing a safe, non-judgmental family

**Federated Church is expected to provide opportunities for Mission involvement through:**

- Presence in our church, the community, and the world
- Mission participation opportunities for all ages
- Encourage community use of Federated Church

**Federated Church is expected to provide Community of Faith and Compassion by being:**

- Safe, inclusive, and non-judgmental
- Welcoming
- Providing prayer and emotional support
- Ministering to one another
- Compassionate, communicative, and providing a process of reconciliation

**Federated Church is expected to provide Worship which includes:**

- Music: utilize both traditional and contemporary music in worship services
- Opportunities for increased church family involvement
- Variety of worship times and types of worship services
- Sermons: Bible-based, relatable to members' needs, applicable to daily lives
- Meaningful

OTHER FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

In addition to focusing on the five themes and expectations noted above resulting from the member survey, the Committee also identified three specific, more immediate needs of the congregation from the survey responses. These needs are:

- Growth
- Reconciliation
- Pastor Staffing

Examples of responses from the member survey for those specific needs include:

**Growth:**

- Increase membership
- Increase member involvement
- More Youth
- Change Worship

**Reconciliation:**

- Resolve conflict
- Have Humility

- Better communication and working relationship with leadership

**Pastor Staffing:**

- Determine staffing needs
- Provide a pastor with needed characteristics
- Explore Pastor Edward's fit and interest

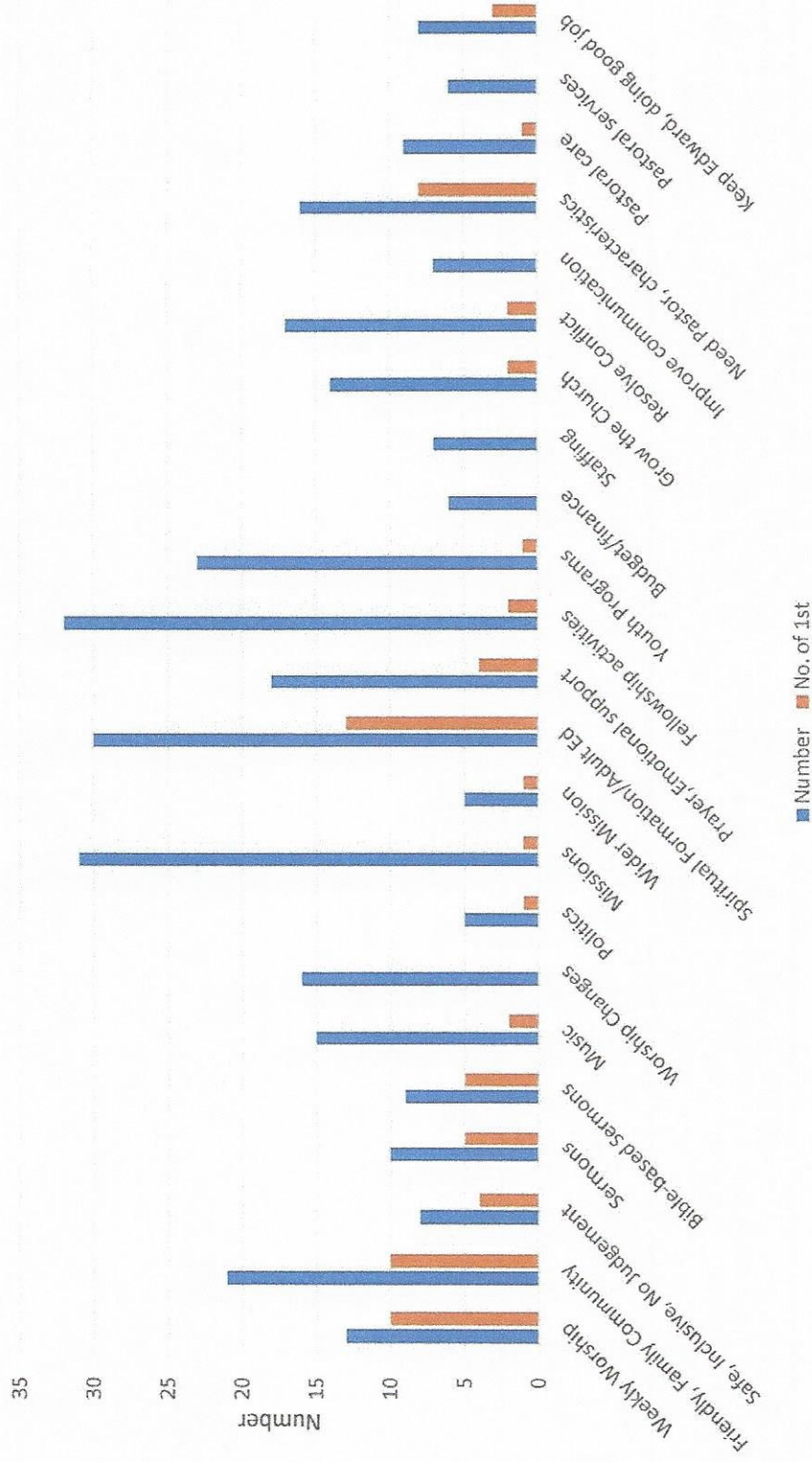
## Responses to Congregational Survey June 2020

Categories	Number	No. of 1st	Variety of Descriptors
Weekly Worship	13	10	Good, relevant, meaningful, uplifting
Friendly, Family Community	21	10	Loving, caring, compassionate, welcoming
Safe, Inclusive, No Judgement	8	4	Stable, a haven, love each other as equals
Sermons	10	5	Uplifting, good, with applications, half-hour
Bible-based Sermons	9	5	Preach the Gospel, scriptural, sound doctrine
Music	15	2	Lively, inspiring, intergenerational, a mix, easy to sing, that attracts young
Worship Changes	16	0	Blended, variety, shorter, Using tech, 2 services, Sat. night, more involvement
Politics	5	1	Stay away from politics, champion social justice
Missions	31	1	Help less fortunate, specific goal, use church building, for all ages, neighbors
Wider Mission	5	1	Beyond our community, international
Spiritual Formation/Adult Ed	30	13	Bible studies, Spiritual growth, guidance, learning opportunities
Prayer, Emotional support	18	4	Prayer chain, grief support, be there in tough times, reachout to home bound
Fellowship activities	32	2	Projects, specific age/gender groups, build relationships, not just at church
Youth Programs	23	1	Sunday school, active & vibrant, More youth involvement, community
Budget/finance	6	0	Financially sound, careful, need building upkeep, more pledges
Staffing	7	0	Great staff, only 1 youth director needed, staff should not be members
Grow the Church	14	2	New members, more young families, recruit, change worship
Resolve Conflict	17	2	Work w/leadership, humility, open-minded, settle leadership, reconciliation
Improve communication	7	0	With/between committees, leadership, congregation
Need Pastor, characteristics	16	8	See separate list of characteristics below
Pastoral care	9	1	Home visits, hospital visits, counseling
Pastoral services	6	0	Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms
Keep Edward, doing good job	8	3	Great, should be Head, wonderful family

### Pastoral Characteristics Mentioned:

Known in the community	Worship leader	Conflict resolution
Popular with youth	Caring & compassionate	Stable, Long-term
Relates to members	Humble	
Who can unite us	Honest	

Survey Responses by Category



## **Summary of Findings**

### **Staffing**

The committee looked at three sources for information for drawing conclusions with regard to the pastoral staffing of Federated church: information received from members in Discussion Sessions held in November 2018, information received from the members in the congregational survey in June/July 2020, and financial information from the church's budgets in recent years.

Items to consider in deciding on a staffing plan:

- Some members advocated for retaining a two pastor plan for the present time which would allow for one of the pastors to be able to dedicate much of their time to church growth and outreach.
- A larger number of the members felt that with the decline in our membership a one-pastor model/supplemented by lay staff assistance was more appropriate.
- The cost differential between a two pastor model versus a one pastor model w/lay staff assistance would amount to approximately \$30,000 more per year than our estimated yearly income. (See proposed budgets for 2021 for more exact figures and more clarification).
- The rule of thumb line drawn between being a one-pastor church and a two-pastor church is 250 to 300 members.
- The weekly totals of church attendance seem to align Federated church more with the one-pastor model than the two pastor model.
- The survey indicated that the members desire a pastor who is caring, humble, and a bridge builder, who can effectively lead worship and inspire.

### **Congregation**

The results of the recent survey of the congregation provide an indication of the desires of the congregation: Spiritual growth, fellowship, missions, community of faith and compassion and worship. The Four Callings presented in the Strategic Plan which was developed in 2011/2012 is in line with the results of the recent survey. It would be prudent for copies of the Strategic Plan as well as the results of the recent congregational survey to be provided to the Governing Council for their use in understanding what the membership is desiring, and in formulating plans and programs for moving Federated Church forward.

### **Other findings**

- The church's Mission Statement and Vision Statement was reviewed and deemed to still be accurate statements as to our mission and vision.
- There were a variety of ideas presented in the survey about what the members deemed important for Worship at Federated Church—Ex: biblical sermons, appeal to youth, use of technology, contemporary or traditional music, lay involvement.
- There is concern about declining and aging membership and the need to grow the church.



- There is concern about resolving conflict/healing divisions within the congregation.
- Communication between leadership and the congregation is important; further surveys and small group meetings may help to arrive at a consensus on how we move forward.
- There is a desire for Spiritual Growth, Fellowship/Relationship building, and Mission work.
- There is a great appreciation for the job that Pastor Edward has been doing as Interim Head of Staff.

Additional information on these findings and more are reflected in the “Church Information Form” drafts which were prepared for each of our denominations as a prelude to the Pastoral Search.