

MISSION STUDY

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Barbara

August 26, 2009

This Mission Study, carried out by the First Presbyterian Church of Santa Barbara (FPCSB), will characterize the church's context, describing the people living in the church's proximity, and the Santa Barbara geographic area. It will describe the particular strengths and challenges of this congregation. Finally, this report will recommend a strategy for mission, growth, and service in our community for the future.

THE COMMUNITY OF SANTA BARBARA

The city of Santa Barbara is comprised of 90,000 people living in an area of 21 square miles (see Appendix A). 300,000 people live in the greater metropolitan area, and 400,000 people live in Santa Barbara County. Much of the city area is dedicated to residences (39.7%) and green spaces (28.8%) while little space is committed to industrial (1.6%) and commercial (0.7%) uses.

Greater Santa Barbara is home to several world class educational institutions including the University of California Santa Barbara, Westmont College, Santa Barbara City College, and numerous other liberal arts, graduate, and trade schools.

In the city, the majority are white (58.3%), the largest minority is Latino (35.0%), then Asians (2.8%), African Americans (1.5%), native Americans (0.4%) and others (see Appendix A). Most either have a college degree (39.3%) or at least some college experience (26.5%), while a large fraction do not have a high school diploma (19.0%). The median home sale price is \$925,000 while the median family income is \$52,570. Most Santa Barbara workers can be characterized as government employees, educators or health care workers. Most businesses are classified as service (56%), while the rest of businesses are characterized as retail (10.4%), manufacturing (8.5%), transportation, communication & utilities (7.0%), finance, insurance & Real Estate (6.0%), construction (5.5%), public administration (3.2%), wholesale trade (2.4%) and agriculture (1.0%).

Housing is in such short supply that as many as 40,000 workers commute into Santa Barbara every day from cities to the South and North where housing is more affordable.

Presbyterians (1.2%) rank fourth among faith groups in Santa Barbara (Appendix A), behind Roman Catholics (41.3%), Jewish (1.9%) and Mormons (1.4%).

Santa Barbara is a travel destination for many, including young people, middle-aged people, retirees, vacationers and the homeless. The travel industry serves many of these visitors with accommodations, restaurants, tours, recreation and entertainment. Many who work in Ventura and the Los Angeles area also live here, or have secondary homes here. These include celebrities, actors and recording artists, as well as business people and entrepreneurs.

A recent study by David Albouy, a University of Michigan economist, studied the types of benefits investors receive when living in a relatively expensive place like Santa Barbara.

Matthew Bandyk (2009) cited Albouy's work and selected Santa Barbara as one of the "10 Pricey Cities That Pay Off," in U. S. News and World Report (see Appendix B). Santa Barbara had the second highest "quality of life," second only to Honolulu, Hawaii. Santa Barbara had the third highest trade productivity in the study. In a follow-up piece, Barney Brantingham's (2009)(see Appendix C) article "Is She Worth It," discusses how these pressures force out single workers aged 30 – 50. (see Appendix C).

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SANTA BARBARA TODAY

By the grace of God, we are a Christian community of people who seek intergenerational fellowship, find spiritual truth, and respond in joyous service in Jesus' name. SEEK. FIND. RESPOND.

For one hundred forty years, First Presbyterian Church of Santa Barbara has been an active church, serving Christ, its members, the community and spreading the word to the world (see Appendix D). Thousands of people have participated in this.

In the past few decades FPCSB has experienced a decline in membership and participation. This mirrors what has been happening all over the country within the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.). This trend has been difficult to counter. Evangelism, outreach to the "unchurched" and spiritual renewal have had limited success. The problem seems to be that, in today's culture, life for middle-aged folks is financially stressful and fast-paced. There are still many "believers" in this group, but they don't appreciate the benefits of belonging to a church. It has been suggested that declines in Sunday School attendance foreshadow larger church declines (Keck, 2009).

FPCSB has many current programs popular with the congregation. The informal and sanctuary Sunday worship services are very well received, with their unique liturgical and musical styles. An early morning meditative communion service in the chapel is offered Sunday as well. Fellowship time occurs before and after services; welcoming and worshippers greet one another as they arrive at church, as well as during the services. Visitors are made to feel welcome. New members often remark about the congregation's warmth and hospitality. Nursery care is provided throughout the morning – a must for young families. A van ministry allows parishioners to come to church who might not otherwise be able. Our newest van, purchased in 2009, is equipped with a wheel chair lift.

FPCSB has a wide variety of educational offerings available. We have a well attended church school for pre-school through high school age children. Junior High School and Senior High School groups meet during the week. Outings for recreation, retreats and mission work are scheduled. PresbyCamp, a summer day camp for 30-35 elementary age children, has been extremely popular among Santa Barbara families, providing training for youth as counselors and counselors-in-training. For adults, Sunday morning classes – many led by Westmont faculty and retired PC(USA) clergy – are well received and well attended (30-40 per Sunday). Small groups for Bible exploration and prayer, called Life Groups, meet throughout the week (for periods of six weeks) during the fall, winter, and spring. The Life Groups further the sense of Christian community and discipleship at First Presbyterian Church.

Fellowship and service groups (Presbyterian Women, Clippers, PresbyFolks) provide opportunities for friendship, learning, and involvement. Pancake breakfasts, an annual Advent Workshop, congregational meetings, and special social events bring the congregation together, furthering our vision of intergenerational Christian community.

FPCSB is an outward-focused, mission-minded church. We have a full-time staff member (volunteer), Chuck Curtis, who serves as Director of Evangelism and Mission. (Chuck also provides significant leadership to Santa Barbara Presbytery's Church in the World Committee.) FPCSB hosts 300-350 people each January at Presbytery's Mission Conference. The church actively supports Presbytery's IMPACT program, sending youth and adults on short-term mission projects, most recently to Central America and Eastern Europe. Under the leadership of the church's Mission Team (committee of session), numerous individuals and groups, including several PC(USA) missionaries, receive strong financial support, prayer, and encouragement.

FPCSB provides significant financial and personal support for members Karl and Jen Hauser (husband and wife), both of whom are students at Fuller Theological Seminary and currently under care of FPCSB and Santa Barbara Presbytery. The church also gives financial support for new church development ministry.

Additionally, FPCSB serves the Santa Barbara community in Jesus' name through participation in and financial support of: Transition House, Community Kitchen, Sonshine Ministry, the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission, and the Unity Shoppe.

A centerpiece of the church's ministry and mission at FPCSB is our Early Childhood Center. Since 1984, some eighty families a year entrust their infants and preschool age children to the program, recognized in the Santa Barbara community for providing excellent licensed care in a Christian environment. Greater attention and effort is being focused on the part of the congregation to reach out to unchurched ECC families.

In FPCSB's "Church Record for 2008" submitted to the Santa Barbara Presbytery, membership increased by 1, for the first time in decades (see Appendix E). One sees striking differences when one compares the population of the City of Santa Barbara with the members of FPCSB. FPCSB has a higher proportion of white people and a lower proportion of minorities than exists in Santa Barbara (Figure 1). FPCSB has a lower proportion of people aged 0 to 45 than the general population and a higher proportion of people aged 66 and older (see Figure 2). We are determined to help reverse that trend.

OUR STRATEGY

The Mission Study process began in 2008. At the 2008 Spring retreat, session members read parts of *Church Next*, by Eddie Gibbs, and *The Purpose Driven Church*, by Rick Warren. At the 2009 Spring retreat, session members read parts of Lois Y. Barrett et al.'s *Treasure in Clay Jars, Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. The session continued to read *Treasure in Clay Jars*, using it for devotions at 2009 session meetings. This book has been particularly useful, by describing many different churches and how they have determined their mission in their community. This

has inspired us to follow some of these examples in discerning our particular mission, and to pursue it in our work.

During the retreats, it was clear that FPCSB had many good programs that were fulfilling many of our members' needs. For continued growth and vitality, however, we decided we needed to look outward, to become increasingly inclusive, and have continued outreach. The session was strongly convicted that this is God's desire for our church. To use Barrett's terminology, we will be a "risk-taking church."

During the retreats, session members characterized what an ideal candidate for the new Associate Pastor position at FPCSB would be. A consensus quickly formed. We seek a person who connects strongly with the young and the young at heart; is extroverted, even gregarious; is Christ-centered, sincere and authentic;

The new Associate Pastor will be a colleague on the pastoral staff with a passion for building intergenerational community. He or she will relate easily to singles and married couples, to new Christians and mature believers, to Gen-Xers and the straight-laced, to those from English-speaking families and those from bilingual families. He or she will be a person with knowledge, gifts and experience in teaching faith and in moving people from belonging to believing, from attending church to bold discipleship: ministry and mission in Jesus' name. He or she will be a gifted preacher and teacher, a fun lover, a strong leader, and a great colleague.

Some assumptions are that the new Associate Pastor will be under 40 years of age and will therefore need some level of housing support/equity sharing. Providing this support, it was agreed, will make the position attractive to a wide range of candidates.

Since Associate Pastors generally have titles that suggest areas of focus and responsibility, based on the discussions and convictions of the session the following title is proposed: *Associate Pastor for Christian Formation and Community Outreach*. This suggests that the Associate Pastor will lead us in intentional growth in faith and discipleship (an inward/church focus) and in connecting and collaborating with other groups (an outward community/evangelical missional focus).

For the Associate Pastor to help move our church forward, he/she/they would be closely involved with and give guidance in the areas of children's ministries and youth ministries, but would not replace or do the work of either of our two current part-time staff members (Director of Children's Ministries [20 hours/week currently]) (Director of Youth Ministries [30 hours/week currently]). We don't want to sacrifice either of our programs or our vision for the sake of cost savings.

As we conceive a new Associate Pastor's role, we see this person/clergy couple leading and equipping us in areas of discipleship and outreach. We do not see ourselves calling an Associate Pastor to do it for us.

The kind of Associate Pastor we hope to call will serve to change the culture of FPCSB, probably in ways we can't foresee. Session, staff and members need to be ready to trust the Holy Spirit as we move into a new future.

New Associate Pastor: Skills and personal qualities as defined by session retreat attendees:

Able to go where people are.
Skilled in building community, especially with younger people (couples, singles & families).
Relates to/attracts younger people.
Can disciple others: train, equip, motivate and empower.
Enthusiastically committed to family ministry.
Mission minded.
Able to connect and collaborate with community organizations.
Bilingual would be a plus.
Team player.
Gregarious, extroverted, dynamic.
Christ centered and sincere.
Heart for youth and seniors (and those in between).
Young at heart.
Sense of humor – a fun person.
High energy level.
Trustworthy and reliable.

Strong Financial Support and Planning

A financial campaign to secure the funds to support a new Associate Pastor has been completed. This campaign, titled *Building a Bridge to Our Future*, raised over \$1.3 million -- \$500,000 of which will pay the new Associate Pastor's salary and benefits for five years. The session has also recently adopted a multi-year financial plan to secure the new pastor's salary in successive years. The financial campaign also helped the congregation clarify the church's vision, particularly the need for a new Associate Pastor. This vision was widely discussed and enthusiastically received. The session is allocating funds, either from church funds or from certain members, for a housing equity-sharing arrangement with the new Associate Pastor. We have confidence that members will be enthusiastic about providing a high level of support in this area.

The session and congregation – and Associate Pastor Judith Muller – are agreed that when the new Associate Pastor arrives, Judith will go to half time, focusing on senior ministries and pastoral care. Her gifts, skills, spirit, faithfulness, and experience are deeply valued in this church community. We further believe that the members of the pastoral staff team at First Presbyterian Church will complement one another well, providing the leadership the church needs and deserves for the future.

SUMMARY

First Presbyterian Church is ready to move forward in a careful process to call an Associate Pastor for Christian Formation and Community Outreach. The session has spent two years in a careful discernment process, considering the needs of this congregation, and today's church and society. The session has been reading and reflecting upon God's call to us to be a missional church, and while viewing the new Associate Pastor's role in relation to this call, the session

understands that the whole church is engaged in the challenge – not just the elders, not just the staff, not just one pastor.

A financial campaign was initiated and successfully completed. We have achieved our goal of having no debt and a financial sustainable future including the salary funds available for a new Associate Pastor as well as a home equity share to assist a new pastor to move here. Planned giving, along with current reserves and a multi-year financial plan, have further contributed to the long-term financial health of the church. The campaign provided church leaders an opportunity to communicate with the congregation – in groups large and small, and during in-home visits – about the church’s vision, with special emphasis on the role a new Associate Pastor will play in relating to new generations of believers. The congregation has embraced the vision. We are ready to proceed.

We look forward to working closely with the Presbytery of Santa Barbara, its Committee on Church Development and Committee on Ministry, to strengthen the witness of Jesus Christ in Santa Barbara and beyond. We thank and praise our God for getting us to this time and place. Having celebrated 140 years of ministry in this community, we are ready for our next chapter. “I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.”

We covet the support and prayers of our sisters and brothers as we step forward in faith.

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