

**Long-Range Planning Committee**  
The First Congregational Church, UCC, Columbus, Ohio

# **Addenda to the Long-Range Plan 2016-2020: The 20/20 Vision**

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The Long-Range Planning Committee drew on data, research and ideas from a number of sources outside and inside the congregation to inform our work on the long-range plan. These addenda to the plan summarize this information and provide context for understanding and implementing the plan, but they are not intended to be adopted as part of the plan.

## **Addendum A: Size of Church Matters**

Members of the Long-Range Planning Committee found Alice Mann's book, *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations*, to be very insightful, raising important ideas and questions that lay leaders and staff of First Church must consider in implementing the plan. The book, published by the Alban Institute, is less than 100 pages and is highly readable.

### **Theory of church size**

Mann draws on the work of Arlin Rothauge to present a theory of congregational size that is very helpful in considering matters of staffing, governance, and members' expectations. The theory defines size as the average number of active members (meaning the average number of people attending weekly worship) and the amount of money contributed regularly. The theory suggests four size categories:

- **Patriarchal/matriarchal church** with up to 50 active members. "This small church can also be called a family church because it functions as a family."
- **Pastoral church** with 50 to 150 active members. The seminary-trained minister is at the center and has as personal relationship with each member.
- **Program church** with 150 to 350 active members. "The program church grows out of the necessity for a high-quality personal relationship with the pastor to be supplemented by other avenues of spiritual feeding. Programs must now begin to fill that role. The well-functioning program church has many cells of activity which are headed up by lay leaders." Much of the clergy's "time and attention must be spent in planning with other lay leaders to ensure the highest quality programs."
- **Corporate church** with 350 or more active members. "The quality of Sunday morning worship is the first thing you usually notice in a corporate church. Because these churches usually have abundant resources, they will usually have the finest organ and one of the best choirs in town." The corporate church has "a significant institutional presence in its community" and often "a cathedral-like building in a prominent location." "At corporate size, complex networks of coordination are still required, but the central pastor must begin to project a large enough symbolic presence – through preaching, presiding, leading the board, and heading the expanded staff – to unify a diverse and energetic community." "Key to the success of the Corporate Church is the multiple staff and its ability to manage the diversity of its ministries in a collegial manner."

During the middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, First Church was a corporate church (more than 350 active members). By the early 1990s, however, average attendance in worship had declined to about 200, so First Congregational had become, in effect, a program church. The 1994 congregational annual report notes the average attendance in worship at slightly more than 200 with 656 listed as members. Active members constituted 31% of members listed on the roll. Membership began to grow rapidly with Tim Ahrens' ministry. The church had 601 members in 1999 and increased each year for 15 years. The number of members was 1,055 in 2014. It appears that our congregation again has attained the size of a corporate church.

In reality, however, First Church is in a plateau between a program church and a corporate church. The church profile in 2014 listed average attendance in worship at 328 compared with

379 five years before and 280 a decade before. It is quite interesting that in 2014, the percentage of active members was 31% of the members on the roll – just like 1994. In Mann’s terms, our congregation is an “in-between church” and is in transition.

With our cathedral-like building, our investment in outstanding music and worship, our commitment to justice, and our senior minister’s public standing, we envision ourselves a corporate church, but we may not currently have sufficient active members to support that vision. Might this be the root of our persistent challenge in meeting our annual operating budget?

Mann’s categories of church size do not imply a value judgment. Churches in each category can be spiritually vital, but the size has implications for ministries, staffing, church leadership, governance, programs, and personal relationships.

### **Church growth**

As the members of the Long-Range Planning Committee reflected on First Church’s plateau, we agree that God is calling us to grow in active membership. We believe that we are positioned for this growth. We are located in a downtown area and in a region with steady population increases. We have a beautiful, historic building, offer an outstanding traditional worship experience, are led by a senior minister with high public visibility, welcome all persons, and are committed to justice. “Congregations that focus *outward* (in both service and invitation) have the fullest *internal* life, as measured by the richness and vitality of programs and ministries,” Mann writes (page 42). Yet growth in active membership will require change – we can’t expect to keep doing what we’re doing and expect things to change – and will require an investment of resources.

For many of us, the term evangelism is tainted by an implication that we must save souls by accepting a narrow theological dogma. “In a multi-cultural, multi-faith society, many mainstream congregations lose their nerve when they try to articulate a spiritual basis for reaching out to others,” Mann says (page 66). If we are to grow in numbers and spirit, we need to define evangelism in our own words. Such a definition might be: First Church is a safe place where each person is welcomed and can follow his or her own faith journey in fellowship with others. Mann quotes two sociologists of religion who declare that growing mainline congregations are the spiritually oriented churches. “Such churches are unapologetically liberal and heavily involved in community ministry, with a clear focus on social justice. Yet the social and moral agenda of these churches is anchored in a deep, meaningful worship experience [which conveys] the expectation, the presumption, the surety that God is present in the service and in the lives of anyone who is open to God’s Spirit.”

Mann articulates three fundamental points regarding church growth (page 43):

1. “Quality and numerical growth are likely to coincide.”
2. “Healthy congregations keep outreach right at the center of their self-understanding.”
3. “Both qualitative and quantitative growth require change and risk.”

Mann acknowledges “growing churches face a dilemma” (page 57). “In general, a church must staff somewhat ahead of the immediate need in order to keep growing.” She quotes an expert on church growth: “As a rule of thumb, if you desire to staff for growth, you need one full-time

program person on your staff for every one hundred active members.” The rule assumes the church already has a church musician. Secretarial and janitorial staff members are over and above the one-per-hundred mark.

### **Making changes**

“Size change raises fundamental questions of identity and purpose which require more than a technical response,” Mann writes (page 62). Church leaders and members must accept the challenge to adapt to change. She cites “five shifts in leadership focus that can help a system to meet an adaptive challenge” (pages 63-64):

1. “Church leaders who discern an adaptive challenge will be more effective if they resist the expectation...that they will take total responsibility for both understanding the problem and developing the solution while others in the system continue with business as usual.”
2. “Effective leaders will not move too quickly to reassure people in the face of an adaptive challenge.... The members themselves need to help calculate the cost of making – and of avoiding – a size transition.”
3. “Leaders confronting an adaptive challenge will not reinforce expected roles.... It helps to cut across the boxes and lines on the church’s organizational chart.”
4. “Leaders...will resist pressure to stuff the genie back in the bottle and restore immediate order.... Energy generated by conflict can help power the congregation’s learning.”
5. “Leaders...will allow the norms (unwritten rules) of the congregation to be examined and challenged.”

### **Role of the long-range plan**

Mann writes (page 21): “In program and corporate size churches, the variety and complexity of relationships require conscious attention to matters of identity, purpose, structure, role of leaders, and so on. Neither the members nor the pastor can intuitively grasp the wholeness of the system. The larger membership and the rich variety of programming will only cohere well if leaders construct a clear identity for the church – often expressed in a mission statement, a vision, or a strategic plan.” For First Church, our long-range plan must project a vision that affirms our church’s identity and gives each member and each commission and committee a clearer understanding of their roles in the congregation and how together we create an evermore welcoming community of faith expressed in worship and service.

## **Addendum B: Goal-Setting and Measurements**

The long-range plan expresses a clear vision for First Church, which is important in a large congregation with multiple worship services and a variety of programs. The plan helps all members understand the church's direction and their important roles within the congregation. The plan also suggests the need for critical decisions regarding building maintenance, staffing for congregational care and other priorities, and investments in communications technology. These decisions will require careful thought, setting priorities, and identifying resources.

To implement the plan, the Long-Range Planning Committee recommends that Church Council manage a process to set church-wide goals and to determine measures (or indicators of success) that tell us whether we are reaching our goals. The goals should be SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Council might also ask commissions and major committees to identify goals and measures for their own work.

Goals and measurements are imperative because:

- The congregation must make strategic investments to maintain our upward momentum. We are more likely to attract the needed resources if we can show a positive impact. If we aren't achieving the desired results, then we will be prepared to redirect the resources.
- The indicators of success can make our church work more transparent and understandable to the whole congregation and further promote the engagement of our members.
- The process of setting goals and tracking the results can drive the evolution of church governance with better decision-making and more effective committees.

The United Methodist Church (UMC) in 2011 urged its congregations to set concrete, measurable goals. The UMC provided a digital reporting system that would permit each congregation to track its success over several years. The measures used are:

- average worship attendance.
- professions of faith.
- number of small groups.
- number of people engaged in mission.
- total amount given to mission shares and ministries beyond the local church.

For more on the UMC approach, see “Take an annual church health checkup” on the next page. Also helpful is “More on Measures and Evaluation: A Companion to the *Vital Congregations Planning Guide*” (2011) that is available on the UMC website.

Resources related to goal-setting by churches often emphasize the challenge to engage church members more deeply in ways that promote discipleship. Unfortunately, these resources rarely offer specific ways to measure this engagement. The UMC suggests counting the number of small groups, Sunday school classes, and Bible studies and the number of participants. In the same way, UMC suggests counting the number of people engaged in mission. More sophisticated is the approach of All Saints Church in Pasadena, Calif., that uses software to create a “spiritual health meter” that tracks participation in various activities and assigns higher scores to activities deemed more important. All Saints Church also is developing other interesting online tools. (See “What to Measure if You’re Mission Driven” on page 14.)

## **Addendum B continued: Take an annual church health checkup**

**By Eric Seiberling**

At the beginning of every year, people often take the time to evaluate their lives and determine new priorities and directions. The same should be true for churches. You need honestly to evaluate your church's progress during the previous year to define the right direction for the new year.

### **Measure the church's vital signs**

You probably have heard discussion about [metrics within the church](#). Metrics serve as indicators much like height, weight, blood pressure, temperature and cholesterol levels. They indicate health or illness and guide further diagnoses. [Look at each of the "church vital signs"](#) across the long term to identify potential trends. Start with the [VitalSigns Dashboard data](#); then use charge conference paperwork to collect the past 20 years of data for your church in the following areas:

- **Church membership:** Membership shows the historical trends of the church and may help show how committed congregants are.
- **Worship attendance:** Worship attendance shows the "heartbeat" of the church. Review attendance relative to previous years and look to understand rises and falls over the year and over multiple years. Also, compare attendance as a percentage of overall membership.
- **Age distribution of the church versus the community:** Obtain [census data](#) to identify the age distribution of your community and compare it to the same distribution for your membership, worship attendance and discipleship attendance. Examining the differences for each area will show potential issues and opportunities for your church.
- **Giving patterns:** Stewardship is measured by the total amount given by a congregation to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries, including apportionments to the denomination as a whole. Understanding the finances of your church and the giving patterns provides [an indication of spiritual health](#) and obedience. It also helps you [understand the capabilities for the church to make changes](#) that will improve its effectiveness.
- **Discipleship activity attendance:** Provides an indicator of spiritual formation, which is measured by small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies. Look at this as a percentage of membership and a percentage of attendance. Ask if your congregation is committed to spiritual growth through discipleship.
- **Missions:** Measured by number of people in the congregation engaged in local, national and international outreach.
- **Transfers in versus out:** Compare transfers into and out of the church. This will show your ability to retain and attract members. Look at significant shifts up and down.
- **Baptisms, confirmations and professions of faith:** Look at these numbers in the context of your congregation. Are you making the appropriate number of disciples relative to your congregation's size?
- **Removals:** Look at the number of removals per year and seek to understand the reason for the removals. If they are deaths, compare to baptisms, confirmations and professions of faith to determine if you can sustain the life of the church.

### **Diagnose the symptoms**

Look for changes and trends in the data. At every significant change in the trends, ask what happened. Was there a change in pastors? Was there a plant closing or new manufacturer that moved to town? Avoid blaming others or external factors but look at your church's actions or inactions and how they influenced the trends. Seek out opinions of a broad spectrum of people inside and outside your church and courageously seek the truth. **Clarity on the current situation** is the only way to create a path forward.

### **Listen to body language**

Take the time to understand your community, calling and capabilities. Start by **understanding your community**, the specific calling of your church and your church's strengths and weaknesses. Look for needs in your community that both fit with your church's calling and strengthen opportunities for the next year.

### **Take time to dream**

Ask each person on your leadership team, "If you could wave a magic wand to make a midsized miracle happen in this church, what would it be?" Distill the themes about people's dreams for the church and **translate them into goals**.

### **Go on a diet**

Unless your church is experiencing significant growth, you will often find that you have similar or reduced resources as the previous year. **Cut 20 percent of last year's programs** to create room for new things in the new year.

### **Create a budget and shop around**

Take the time to reflect and **evaluate each potential investment** before finalizing your budget. Examine staffing, programs and spending to see if they move your church forward to achieving God's calling and if the church can successfully execute it. Compare the goals of different spending options and see which ones hold the most promise. Evaluate paid and volunteer staffing the same way as financial commitments.

### **Share the vision and look for quick wins**

Assessment and planning are only the first step. Share the vision with the congregations and **look for the quick wins** to build momentum.

Like going to the doctor, the annual church health checkup may not be enjoyable. However, it can help prevent major problems before they occur as well as provide diagnoses to make the changes necessary to create or maintain a healthy church.

### **Reprinted from the United Methodist Church website:**

<http://www.umcom.org/learn/take-an-annual-church-health-checkup>

Downloaded on August 16, 2015

## **Addendum B continued: What to Measure if You're Mission Driven**

Posted July 9, 2015

By Zachery First

My favorite Peter Drucker misquotation is, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” Drucker wrote a great deal about how managers should measure performance, but this particular phrase didn’t come from his pen. Instead, his measurement advice was linked to his belief in “managing by objectives,” and above all urged managers to “focus on results.”

The challenge is that all too often, managers haven’t asked what results they ultimately want to achieve. Most of what an organization chooses to measure, and to do, must hinge on this question. I recently had the opportunity to learn from what, in design-speak, we might call an “edge case” of this: the question of what measures should guide the management of a church. For churches today, the common answer is that growth is the goal, and membership is the measure. Typically, membership is one of the three top-line metrics used to assess a church’s health (along with worship attendance and fundraising levels). Churches fixate on membership on the theory that members are donors. But that theory is at best half true. More important, it mostly ignores the question of what results the church is aiming to achieve.

Consider [All Saints Church](#) in Pasadena, CA, widely regarded as one of America’s leading Episcopal parishes. Founded in 1882, All Saints has attracted much attention, including both support and protest, for its long history of progressive stances. The church fought the relocation of Japanese-Americans to internment camps in 1942, launched an AIDS Service Center in 1986, and blessed its first same-sex covenant in 1991. (Disclosure: I attend All Saints, and have consulted pro bono with the organization.)

The Episcopal Church officially reports that All Saints has about 8,000 members. Is that good? Would 9,000 be much better? All Saints Rector Ed Bacon (if you’re not Episcopalian, think of him as the CEO of the enterprise) doesn’t believe those are the right questions. “Sure, we love to see big numbers,” Bacon told me. “But what really makes our hearts beat fast is transformed people transforming the world. Membership isn’t our business. Turning the human race into the human family is.”

It doesn’t help that “member” turns out to be an ambiguous label. Do people become members of the flock when they make financial offerings, or make a habit of attending services—or must they appear on a mailing list, or have formally graduated with a new-member class? I couldn’t get a definitive answer from either the national church or parish administrators. I came away believing that the “member” designation, as Shakespeare wrote about reputation, might be “earned without merit, and lost without deserving.”

Of course, it’s possible to arrive at a consistent way of measuring membership, if that is what matters. Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, in their book [The Other 80 Percent](#), offer a well-researched formula: replace whatever number you are using by tracking your average weekly worship attendance and multiplying by 2.2 (that being the average ratio of congregation size to

weekly attendance in Protestant churches). Fair warning: the result will probably be much smaller than your mailing list total.

But All Saints decided to focus on something other than the membership rolls, however well calculated. Instead, its leadership wondered how to gauge the transformation of people that Bacon identified as the real objective. When the All Saints team focused on this, they made the same kind of discovery as many companies that use [customer journey maps](#): people heading toward the same destination don't always get there by the same path. Not everyone who is on a dynamic spiritual journey—and wants All Saints to be integral to it—is going to pass through the gate of membership. There is, however, one element they do share, and that is *engagement*.

As Warren Berger writes in [A More Beautiful Question](#), solutions to apparently intractable problems begin when we “challenge [our] own assumptions, reframe old problems, and ask better questions.” This is what All Saints is doing as it replaces the old question—How do we grow our membership?—with a better one: How do we more deeply engage the people we serve?

To establish a baseline of performance on which to build, All Saints has begun using software (from [Arena](#)) to assign a score to every activity that signals some level of engagement. Regular attendance at a weekly study group, for example, is scored higher than signing a petition. By combining these scores with other kinds of participation records compiled in the past, the church generates an aggregate engagement score for everyone in its database. This “Spiritual Health Meter” suggests to pastoral staff to whom they could be reaching out more. Jeremy Langill, All Saints’ Director of Youth Ministry, offered the example of an All Saints kid who was consistently engaged in one youth program, but uninvolved in all others. Made aware of this by the data, Langill took note when the girl’s love of board games came up in a casual conversation with her parents. He made a point to tell her about game night, and that served as a pivot point. She went on to participate in a whole range of activities, and grew far more engaged.

Soon, All Saints will add another innovation: an online tool that parishioners can use to make the church aware of their particular talents and interests. Combining insights from this personality inventory with the Spiritual Health Meter, All Saints hopes to target its communications better. A music-lover too busy to read through an entire church calendar might like to get a Netflix-style “recommended for you” message about a forthcoming jazz service. “Christianity is such an incredible journey of self-reflection, of finding a calling in your heart,” Charlie Rahilly, a former warden of All Saints’ vestry (think member of the board), told me. Added Langill, “If we are really honest with ourselves, worship is not just on Sunday morning.”

Engagement is not the only objective All Saints needs to think about; the church must be financially healthy to keep doing its work. But these two objectives are undoubtedly aligned. All Saints’ fundraising data shows with great consistency that, for every additional year a person pledges, their pledge increases by 8%. That’s a rate of return most investors would take in a heartbeat, and it bespeaks the commitment that comes with deepening engagement, not continuing “membership.”

Beneath All Saints' new understanding of its results is a deeper understanding of itself as an organization. It is too simplistic, as Drucker wrote in his book on [managing the non-profit organization](#), to define enterprises in this sector by what they *don't* do:

It is not that these institutions are “non-profit,” that is that they are not businesses. It is also not that they are “non-governmental.” It is that they do something very different from either business or government. Business supplies, either goods or services. Government controls. A business has discharged its task when the customer buys the product, pays for it, and is satisfied with it. Government has discharged its function when its policies are effective. The “non-profit” institution neither supplies goods or services nor controls. Its “product” is neither a pair of shoes nor an effective regulation. Its product is a *changed human being*.

Some businesses, too, are membership-based and need to focus on engagement. Other businesses might gain an edge in attracting and retaining talent if they were seen as more purely dedicated to engaging their customers and enhancing their lives. Whatever your business, the larger lesson of the All Saints story is that great organizations focus on results. They start with a clear idea of what counts, then find a good way to count it.

**Printed from Harvard Business Review website:**

<https://hbr.org/2015/07/what-to-measure-if-youre-mission-driven>

Posted on July 9, 2015, and downloaded on August 16, 2015

## **Addendum C: Questions and Data to Guide First Church**

The long-range plan projects a vision for a growth in active membership of First Congregational Church that energizes our congregation's ministries and inspires our members to invest their time, talents, and resources. Addendum A argues that our congregation has the appropriate aspirations and trappings of a corporate-size church, but our active membership (as defined by average Sunday attendance) places our congregation on a plateau between a program church and a corporate church.

The Long-Range Planning Committee does not place a value judgment on being a program church or a corporate church. The committee recognizes, however, that our historic building, public leadership of our clergy, our music program, and our commitment to justice and mercy ministries require the support of a larger active membership. Even more imperative is God's call to us, in a downtown and a region experiencing steady population increases, to extend a warm and genuine welcome to all seeking a spiritual home.

The Long-Range Plan acknowledges that by many important indicators First Church is on a positive trajectory. We have the largest percentage of members who are part of the Millennial generation of any United Church of Christ congregation in Ohio. That means we are attracting young people and young families, critical to our congregation's future. Our music program continues to grow, requiring additional space and resources. Our senior minister occupies a public pulpit in the tradition of Washington Gladden. Our beautiful building is a community cultural asset in the heart of the Discovery District, and we have ample parking, unlike most urban churches. But we can't rest on our success.

Growth in active membership will require change and risk. The Long-Range Plan doesn't propose a radical departure from our current ministries, but the plan recommends investments in new staff members in congregational care, music, and communications and in maintaining our building and equipment. Addendum A notes that a church must add staff members ahead of the immediate need if the congregation is to grow. Our building and music programs are strengths to build on. Communications is important to engaging our members and to effective church governance. Congregational care nurtures the bonds of love and compassion that bind us as a community of faith. The Long-Range Planning Committee recognizes that these investments can't be made in one year, but our congregation must make significant decisions over the next five years to sustain our positive trajectory. In making those decisions, however, we must pay attention to trends that could undermine our momentum.

Addendum B suggests that goal-setting and measuring results are critical to monitoring change and minimizing risk. Even before determining goals, however, we must better understand our church's current situation. Presented below are trends and data about our church that the Long-Range Planning Committee considered in its work and that the congregation should consider in implementing the long-range plan.

**Membership.** From the church's annual reports, the number of members on the roll was 625 in 1993, rose to 677 in 1995, but dropped to 601 in 1999. From 2000 to 2014, the number of members on the roll rose each year from 653 to 1,055.

**Average Sunday worship attendance.** Most church studies suggest the average Sunday worship attendance is the best predictor of the congregation's active membership and is a better indicator of church health than the number of members on the role. In 1994, average Sunday attendance was slightly more than 200. In 2004, Sunday attendance was 280. Over the next few years, average attendance rose slightly to 390 in 2009 and 2010. Average attendance dropped to 375 in 2011 and 2012 even further to 328 in 2013. Attendance rose slightly to 335 in 2014.

We must better understand the meaning of this significant drop in average attendance.

- Is this a sign that we are losing active members? If so, do we know why?
- Are younger members and more established members simply not attending as regularly as in the past? If so, are they also less active by other measures?
- While maintaining the value of corporate worship, would streaming our worship services on the Internet meet a need of our members and the wider community?

**Number of giving units.** First Church bases its annual budget on a stewardship campaign each fall in which individuals and families are asked to pledge for the next year. A giving unit is a household composed of a family or an individual who make a pledge. In 1980, First Church had about 360 giving units. Over the past 35 years, that number has dropped significantly, risen, and then leveled off.

David Holt, former moderator and former church treasurer, summarized our congregation's giving patterns in a report for the Stewardship Committee in mid-2013. He reported on adult households, removing children and youth pledges from the total. The number of adult pledging units bottomed out in 2000 at 165. The number rose in the first half of the last decade to 282 in 2006 and 279 in 2007. The number of pledge units then dropped, likely due to the recession, and the numbers haven't fully recovered. The number of pledges was 262 in 2009, 239 in 2010, 222 in 2011, 246 in 2012, 223 in 2013, 240 in 2014, and 240 in 2015.

**Pledges lost.** Although the number of giving units has been relatively steady in the last few years, this does not necessarily reflect a stable base of contributors. Mr. Holt found that 49 giving units who pledged in 2012 did not pledge for 2013. That represented slightly more than 20 percent of the total giving units. 2013 was not an unusual year in this regard. For the 10-year period of 2004 to 2013, an average of 42.5 pledging units were lost each year.

**Average pledge.** The average amount pledged each year by giving unit has increased fairly steadily since 2001, despite the recession years. This would seem to be a positive sign of confidence in and support for the church by our active members. Mr. Holt noted that in 1998 the average pledge was \$1,348 and the median pledge was \$765. These figures rose fairly steadily, even through the recession years. In 2013, the average pledge was \$2,936 and the median pledge was \$1,870. The median is the dollar amount at which one-half the giving units pledged more than that amount and one-half pledged less than that amount. The average pledge in 2014 was \$2,676 and in 2015 was \$2,840.

The Long-Range Plan recommends creation of a Stewardship Commission with a year-round emphasis on stewardship. Part of the charge to the existing Stewardship Committee (and to a

potential Stewardship Commission) should be to study carefully the church demographics, giving patterns, and finances to determine how best to engage our members' time, talents, and resources. Among the questions that should be considered by the Stewardship Committee, Church Council, and other church bodies are:

- Are we effectively engaging our members? The number of giving units each year who failed to renew their pledge may be a sign that we are consistently losing active members. Giving units are lost because some members may die, move out of town, or leave the church for other reasons; members may lose a job or have other financial difficulties. But is there a significant number who might continue if they were more engaged?
- What are the stewardship patterns across generations? Some studies suggest that younger generations are less likely to make an annual pledge and are more likely to give through ways other than the Sunday offering plate (i.e., direct deposit). Is this true for First Church? If so, how might this affect our approach to stewardship campaigns now and in the future?
- Can we track how well we engage our members' time and talents? Clearly, it is easier to count the dollars given. In general, people need to be engaged before they will invest. If our church engages and empowers our members to respond to God's mission in their own lives and in the world, will the resources follow?

**Statistics for First Congregational Church**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Members on roll	601	653	700	718	753	775	787	851	889	923	939	956	972	1,005	1,029	1,055	x
Average Sunday attendance	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	386	379	390	390	375	375	328	335	x
Number of adult giving units	176	165	220	237	237	247	244	282	279	275	262	239	222	246	223	240	240
Average pledge in \$	1,824	2,175	1,987	1,994	2,040	2,175	2,242	2,224	2,375	2,501	2,664	2,875	2,766	2,595	2,936	2,676	2,840
Median pledge in \$	1,000	1,470	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,470	1,400	1,440	1,500	1,500	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,650	1,870	x	x

x – signifies data not available.

Average pledge in \$ – The average amount pledged by giving unit is determined by dividing the total amount pledged by the number of giving units.

Median pledge in \$ –The median amount pledged by giving unit is the dollar amount at which one-half the giving units pledged above that amount and one-half gave below that amount.

Data compiled from First Congregational Church annual reports and from Sharon Leidheiser and David Holt.

## **Addendum D: The Millennial Generation and the Church**

The Rev. Tim Ahrens' research into the demographics of First Congregational Church found that we have the largest percentage of our membership in the Millennial Generation (born between 1980 and 2000) of any United Church of Christ congregation in Ohio. That bodes well for the future of our congregation, but it also means that we must understand the interests and challenges of this generation if we are to grow together.

The Long-Range Planning Committee found valuable insights in the book *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* by Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer.

The book draws heavily on a survey of 1,200 members of the Millennial Generation. Among the statistics from the survey:

- 13% of Millennials considered any type of spirituality to be an important part of their lives.
  - Most Millennials don't think about religious matters at all.
- 75% think of themselves as Spiritual vs. Religious.
- 90% believe it is their responsibility to make a difference in the world.
  - Millennials feel they can impact the future.
- 60% believe they will make some "great contribution" in their lifetime.
- 30% attend worship on a regular basis.
- 24% are active in religious organization.
- 77% affirmed the statement: "I am motivated to serve others in society."
- 60% give their money to a charity, religious organization, or nonprofit.
- 64% believe the government should provide healthcare and retirement benefits.
- 57% agree or strongly agree that their commitment to Jesus is important.
- 25% believe the Bible is the written word of God.
- 70% believe the American churches are irrelevant.

The Millennial Generation has no stereotype. They are all on different paths.

Millennials want:

- A connection with family
- A sense of connection
- A mentor
- To have fun
- Work-life balance
- Results

Millennial are not:

- Workaholics
- Anti-religion or anti-Christian

Millennials:

- Communicate unlike any other generation (technology)
- Are green, but not too green (environment/sustainable)

- Are financially confused
- Desire to return to traditional values
- Very inclusive and open to others
- Respect older generations
- The most diverse generation
- Open to same-sex marriage
- Empowered
- Informed, when they want to be
- Believe in the teachings of Jesus
- Strongly anti-institutional
- Care about how a church's money is spent, especially on missions

What churches should do to attract and retain Millennials:

- Become serious missional churches
- Overcome Millennial religious apathy
- Avoid inward focus towards its congregation
- Become radically committed to the immediate community
- Go deep in biblical teaching, especially the New Testament
- Sincerely friendly and inviting
- Love all spiritual nations
- Demonstrate transparency, humility, and integrity
- Unleash the simple power of inviting
- Connect Boomer parents with Millennial children

## **Addendum E: Potential Strategies and Program Ideas**

Since April 2015, the Long-Range Planning Committee has met with Church Council, Board of Trustees, church staff, and representatives of each commission and held two “listening sessions” to hear from church members. Committee members also reviewed responses to a questionnaire about the long-range plan that was widely circulated among church members.

A number of good suggestions and intriguing ideas were offered during these discussions. The Long-Range Planning Committee was not able to incorporate all of these suggestions for strategies and programs into the long-range plan, but committee members felt these ideas should not be lost. As a result, many of these suggestions are compiled in this addendum. The compilation is meant only to give ideas to commissions, committees and staff members to consider as they think about how to implement the long-range plan.

### **Worship** (liturgy, music, experience of God)

Many in our congregation consider our worship services to be an area of strength. How might we build on this strength? (Not in order of priority.)

1. Worship exists to support the individual’s faith journey.
  - Offer opportunities for members to gather after the worship service to explore the message of the day. These could be forums to dig deeper, raise questions, or transform the message into action.
  - Elevate the role of spiritual experience in the worship service.
2. Develop extensions to the worship experience.
  - Use the Internet to stream the services, in addition to making CDs available (reaching more age groups)
  - In the worship bulletin include ways to expand the experience, such as inspirational meditations or references to current news and expert sources. This may be provided as web links or print annotations.
3. Evaluate what is included in worship.
  - There is interest in addressing or at least mentioning events in our community and world.
  - There is interest in being more specific in prayers, addressing people and events.
  - Open a discussion on WHY we do what we do in worship.
  - Make an effort to include children and youth more consistently in the worship services.
4. Elevate worship leadership.
  - Leaders include clergy, liturgists, choir and musicians, and other speakers, and include children and youth
  - Worship leaders have the responsibility of modeling peace and grace in worship.
  - The goal is to experience God, learn about God, and glorify God.
5. Our music program has a big role in the worship service and life and identity of the church.
  - Strengthen the children and youth music programs by involving more community members, perhaps by developing a choir school model.
  - Add music activities and exposure to music in children’s education.

- Offer other worship opportunities at different times (evenings, other days) with more, less, or different music.
- Build on our concert series and evensong service.
- Include more varied music offerings at 9 a.m. service (children’s choir, soloists, instrumentalists).
- More space is needed for the adult choir for rehearsal and in the worship space.
- Add another staff musician for children’s choir leadership and organ accompaniment.

**Welcome** (racial, ethnic, gender, educational, and economic diversity; handicapped access)

First Church as a “corporate church” can be a little intimidating with its imposing cathedral and grand artwork and design. Members know that the congregation is friendly, but strangers may not. Making everybody feel as though this is a safe space means meeting everybody’s needs.

1. Access

- Improve handicap accessibility to the church building.
- Improve signage.
- Create space in the center of the sanctuary for wheelchairs
- Add more accessible restrooms

2. Diversity

- Take the campaign for marriage equality and the LGBTQIA community and apply that strategy for an anti-racism campaign.
- Support programming that holds up the abolitionist history of this church.
- Hold regular, weekly meetings that address social-justice issues, i.e., a First Church Town Hall.
- Develop a simple contemporary worship service option that uses video, text, more story-telling and engagement, and a question-and-answer portion for real-time processing, feedback, and community-building.
- Develop marketing materials to be used in a variety of ways, such as distributing to local educational institutions, business organizations, realtor associations, and community “welcome wagons.”
- Work with local black church(es) on monthly joint services and/or cultural exchanges or missions.
- Use Sunday school curriculum with a consistent message of social justice. Adult Education should provide social justice education through discussion of racial disparities, white privilege, and real American history.

3. Ways to attract diversity

- Better signage promoting the church and its core values.
- The development of a small park on East Broad Street
- After-school program/tutoring for elementary school kids.
- Evening services on Saturday or Sunday.
- Bring your neighbor/friend to church day (in line with being open and affirming).
- Become the spiritual center of Black Lives Matter in Columbus, Ohio – a solace and safe space for activists and this community of organizers.

**Connect** (congregational care, relationships within church)

1. Share God’s love by intentionally building relationships within our congregation and creating true community of faith and connections between people.
  - Assign older members to connect with or mentor new members, perhaps based on living in the same or similar neighborhoods
  - Build small satellite groups by geographic location or common interests.
  - Provide fellowship opportunities outside of coffee hour.
  - Determine ways to involve more people other than weeknight meetings at the church. This may require gatherings at different times and locations or online.
  - Offer open, casual conversations over coffee for members during the 10 a.m. hour on Sunday who may not be interested in attending an adult education class.
  - Help members find their “niche” and discover their own gifts for ministry and service.
    - Commissions’ open house event with representatives sharing what they do so people can choose how to get involved.
    - Assimilate current members more effectively: “activate our inactive members.”
2. Congregational care is a significant need.
  - Sustain the momentum from previous initiatives in this area.
  - Establish a “leader” or point of contact, perhaps a staff member or lay leader.
3. Live-stream worship services to engage members who may not be in church each Sunday.

**Engage** (justice, mercy, outreach)

1. “If you are not engaged, you will not invest.”
2. Bring focus to and enrich our church’s justice ministries by setting priorities and narrowing the number of mission partners.
3. Agree on a targeted mission for our church for a specific period of time.
4. Develop a “gateway mission” in which everyone is welcome to serve with fellowship and engagement on many levels.
5. Focus on local issues of poverty and homelessness in Columbus. Our church’s membership in B.R.E.A.D. is important.
6. Consider “hands-on” mission activities done on a regular basis.
  - “Hands and feet engagement.”
  - Develop closer links to Gladden Community House and Faith Mission.
  - Offer again a childcare facility as an outreach mission. Parents would recognize our church as a nonjudgmental and safe place for their children.
  - Host one-time events, such as the vegetable give-away, where church members can help without joining a committee.
  - Hold a justice or mission activity one Saturday morning each month that is open to our church members and the downtown community.
  - Develop joint projects with predominantly African-American churches.
7. Partner with other congregations, organizations, and downtown neighbors to support effective and thriving local mission efforts.
8. Communicate more effectively the opportunities and results of justice and mission activities to church members and the wider community.
  - Have an article on justice and mercy in each church newsletter.

- Have clear mission statements for the Justice and Mercy Commission and its committees and communicate the work and leadership of each committee in the church newsletter.
  - The Justice and Mercy Commission should communicate both what is happening and what should happen.
  - Place more information on the church's website regarding the use of the church's mission offerings.
9. Do more to engage members in service to and fellowship with each other and across generations.
    - Assist adults in providing care to aging parents – a ministry of helping older members and their care-givers. An example is the “Helping Hands Ministry.”
    - Develop an Adopt-A-Grandchild program.
    - Bring back game night.
  10. Encourage the Education Commission and Justice and Mercy Commission to collaborate.
    - Adult education should offer programs that address the racial history of America.
    - Activities during the 10 a.m. hour on Sunday could be expanded beyond programming by the Education Commission.
    - Define how we promote justice by raising awareness, educating ourselves (i.e., classes, discussion, web-links), and taking action.
  11. Encourage all of the church's commissions and committees to consider, within the realm of their responsibilities, how they might contribute to justice and mercy.
  12. Understand the difference between justice and mercy.
  13. Reduce the bureaucracy of First Church. Everything requires going through too many staff members and committees. Growing churches have ministry teams, rather than commissions.
  14. Explore the opportunities and challenges of being a downtown neighborhood church, as well as a regional destination congregation.
    - “God is calling us to serve as a downtown church to a growing downtown.”
    - Programming is needed to attract our new neighbors.
    - Our church could become a community or civic center for the downtown population.
    - Our church could host community forums and provocative lectures on topics of significant public interest.
    - Our church's lawn could host summer musical or literary events and our church building could host classes or gatherings for yoga, knitting, exercise, etc.
  15. To attract and retain members of the Millennial generation, a congregation should, among other things:
    - Become serious missional churches.
    - Avoid inward focus towards its own membership.
    - Become radically committed to the immediate community. “What is the Good News for the neighborhood?”

**Build** (resources, staffing, facilities, stewardship)

1. According to an Alban Institute study, First Church is, based the size of its active membership, between a “program church” and a “corporate church.” To continue to grow, staff members should focus their time and energy on lay leaders, who will then carry out ministry and more.
2. Growing the membership of the congregation:

- One of the strongest predictors of whether a congregation will grow numerically is how well it does in caring for children and teenagers. Congregations that do well in this area — where children come to church with their parents, where the congregation values this kind of ministry, and where people are satisfied with what the congregation offers their children — are more likely to grow.
  - Congregations grow because the people who worship there regularly invite others to come along.
  - Congregations that show strength in welcoming new people, where significant numbers of folks began worshipping there in the last five years, are more likely to be experiencing numerical growth.
3. The average first-time visitor in a church is a fulltime-employed, unmarried female in her early 40s who has also been recently involved in other congregations.
  4. We should intentionally utilize the standing in the community of both the high-profile senior minister and historic cathedral to facilitate growth.
  5. Growth in membership and stewardship will require change and risk.
  6. Ministry and support staff must grow with congregation.
  7. There was a consistent theme of inviting and engaging new members who are young adults or part of young families.
  8. 32% of our membership is in the range of 18 to 34 years of age (Millennials). Our church has the highest percentage of Millennials of any UCC congregation in Ohio.
  9. Finances and stewardship:
    - Members need to understand stewardship better. There is a desire for increased financial transparency, which will result in more financial stability.
    - Financial stewardship must be emphasized year around to raise awareness of the cost of operating the church. Articles must be published in the newsletter informing members how money is being spent on improvements and maintenance. Stop multi-pledge drives to meet the budget. They will drive people from the church. Maybe we can't afford all the full-time staff members.
    - Commissioners and committee chairs are regularly exposed to the church's budget realities, but the whole membership of the church needs to better understand what it really takes to run a church of our size. Perhaps, a "Church Finance 101" program might be offered several times a year that focuses on church goals and current needs for staffing and building maintenance.
    - Millennials give differently than Baby Boomers – more variety and electronic transactions.
    - In a focus on stewardship, the following themes emerged: transparency, education, everyone's responsibility, on-going process, a more robust approach to funding our programs and staff.
    - We must pay attention to changing economic realities. The trend is for more working class and middle class people and fewer affluent people every year.
  10. Recommendations of the Resource Task Force:
    - Make on-line giving available.
    - Improve opportunities for pledging by new members.
    - Capital improvements: Move ahead on re-financing the west lot.
    - Communications: Develop events and actions to appeal to people moving into Downtown Columbus.

- Regularly follow up legacy and endowment donors.
  - Space use: Assess increasing revenue from weddings.
  - Increase building space use by outside groups.
  - Establish minimum fees to use church space.
  - Develop a downtown farmer's market on west lot.
  - Parking: Maximize revenue with CCAD, CMA, & others using their facilities.
  - Missions: Pursue Good Samaritan suggestions from United Way.
  - Increase giving to endowment mission funds or mission-driven church programs through limited Sunday plate offerings.
  - Children's program: Initiate summer music camp.
  - Provide musical learning opportunities.
  - Provide tutoring for elementary school children.
  - Endowments: Seek endowment of minister of music or associate minister or director of Christian education.
  - Foundations: Increase funding from foundations.
11. According to the congregational survey, 70% of respondents volunteer monthly in some kind of social service capacity. (One observation is that they are not necessarily volunteering at the church. Why?)
  12. The future health of the church requires an ordering of priorities towards a genuine long-term engagement in work with young people. Youth ministry keeps the church young and energetic. Staffing and budgeting should reflect this.
  13. More staff members are needed. Current staff members are very busy maintaining current programs and don't have time to evaluate, create or expand the programs.
  14. The congregation expects the clergy to do too much. Family-life balance is an issue for the clergy. The sabbatical for clergy is important.
  15. The Building and Grounds Commission has a "mission of space." The building must be in good repair. Pay attention to handicapped accessibility; make wise use of space; and prioritize maintenance and improvements of building.
  16. Input from House and Grounds Commission:
    - All church members should understand the complexity of the building, both in its spaces and mechanical functions. The commission is starting to develop photo documentation (e.g., go into the boiler room, all the areas of the kitchens, storage areas, etc.) to educate members about the resource and responsibility of the building.
    - More transparency and education related to the costs of the building's upkeep.
    - Improve the volunteer participation of church members in some projects, such as major cleanings, gardening, handyman-type activities, and other areas where members may have special skills (technical, painting, engineering, etc.) that could be utilized.
  17. A member of the Board of Trustees currently also is a member of the House and Grounds Commission, which is helpful in understanding the needs of the building.
  18. Our church could become more of a community or civic center with a variety of activities that engage the community.

## **Communicate**

1. Committees and commissions could use email, social media and other communication technology to exchange information and conduct business and reduce the number of face-to-face meetings.
2. In a changing digital world, our congregation should explore various ways to communicate with members and the wider community about the Good News of the Gospel and the faith community of First Church.
3. The church should keep in touch with high school and college graduates, perhaps through social media, and encourage them to remain active in the congregation.
4. How do we create a communication feedback loop? For example, the House and Grounds Commission would like feedback from the congregation, as well as to identify when and where the building does not meet the needs for programs.
5. Intergenerational activities should be developed to bring people of various ages together around their interests, rather than just serving together on committees.
6. Improve and, in most cases, establish adequate, user-friendly signage inside and outside the building. The question is: “If we went to a museum that had dated, worn signage similar to ours, would we think it worthy of our support?”
7. A welcome center to greet visitors and members at the top of the stairs at the Ninth Street entrance that would have modern, digital signage with a schedule and building directory.
  - A volunteer could staff the welcome center on weekdays and Sundays.
  - The welcome center would have information about programs, sermons, etc.
  - Digital signage is less expensive than it once was. With a completely new, responsive website design, the information feed for the digital signage could be pulled automatically from the website.
8. Congregational meetings should be forums for discussion and debate, not just presentation of information.
9. The church newsletter should regularly include articles on justice and mercy, descriptions of the work of committees, and the operation of the church (for example, purchases made through the remembrance fund ought to be reported in the church newsletter or the “Parish News” on Sundays.)
10. First Church should have a high-capacity web presence.
11. “People don’t join churches to get into organizational stuff.” We must be careful not to overwhelm new members with too much information at the beginning.
12. Educate the congregation to be affirmative about persons with disabilities. The congregation means well, but there is a lack of knowledge.
13. Communicate not only the opportunities to be involved in actions of mercy and justice, but also share the results of such actions.
14. Conduct a communication audit of the church. What tools of communications do we have? When and how are we using them? How can technology improve communications?
15. Survey our church members regularly to make sure the direction of our church has broad support or whether we are missing something.