



MISSION STUDY
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT TENAFLY
Completed Spring 2020

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Our Mission Statement

We are here to continue Christ's work, inviting people to personally experience God and be transformed into followers of Christ, reaching out in love and compassion to a world in need.



Mission Study Process

The information and data used to complete this study was gathered from multiple sources over the course of several months. The Mission Study Team comprised of members of the Presbyterian Church at Tenaflly, Richard Chan, Indiana Diaz, Jeanne Lambert, Carolyn Rocco, Ellie Sturrock and Interim Pastor Peter Magnan, conducted a series of interviews with groups of fellow PCAT members. The team asked members what was good about our church, what works, what members appreciated and what they looked forward to in church. The team also asked what the church could do better, what is not working and what needs to be improved. Another set of questions focused on what our members see as critical needs in the congregation and the community. What can our church do to make people's lives better?

The study team also drew on information gathered at a church-wide meeting held after Sunday service last spring to review the history of our church. Team members took note of controversies in the church, as well as a decades long decline in membership.

Finally, the team considered demographic information contained in a Ministry Area Profile developed by the Precept Group. The profile focused on the Northern Valley portion of Bergen County.

Member Interviews Questions & Answers



Q. What is good about the Presbyterian Church at Tenaflly? What works? What do you appreciate? What do you look forward to?

Our congregation has a strong sense of belonging. We are a family committed to one another and which actively celebrates each other's joys, while offering comfort and prayer to members who are hurting. One member commented that people rally around whenever there is a need, offering flowers, dinners, hospital visits or just companionship. "There are people who help you and you don't even know them."

Our children are also extremely important and a vital part of our church. As you will see elsewhere in this report, we would like even more children to join our congregation and we cherish the ones who are among us now. "There is a strong intergenerational connection. Our biggest and best asset is our children."

Members of our church also celebrate our exceptionally strong musical offerings, our mission work and our Sunday worship service blending traditional and contemporary elements with thoughtful, uplifting sermons.

Q. What could we be do better? What isn't working? What needs to be improved?

We understand how hard it is to attract young families to a church in this modern world but we are eager to work with our new minister to try to increase the number of young people in our midst. Church members offered numerous suggestions, including holding more youth events, setting up mission projects and trips, doing more outreach to young adults, sponsoring Friday night youth concerts and even consideration of hiring a youth minister.

Other things we could do better include reaching out to seniors in Tenaflly and other surrounding communities, setting up an arts program, doing a better job of welcoming visitors and potential members to our church, making better use of technology and social media, doing more fellowship and engaging in more spiritual activities and retreats.

Q. What are the needs we see around us? In the church? In the community?

Members responded to this set of questions very specifically, offering a number of suggestions for what we could do better in both the church and the community. In terms of our church, members said our leaders should do a better job of communicating with the congregation. We should update our website, take advantage of social media and consider streaming our Sunday service into different parts of the church so people could listen even if they are not in the Sanctuary. People also suggested we ask older members of our church to talk about their careers and educations and share their insights with our younger people.

Members also offered a range of suggestions for reaching out to the community. Among other ideas, members said we should do a church service outdoors, do more publicity and advertising, invite veterans to give talks, host a thank you party for the local food bank, help people looking for work and provide seminars on such issues as loneliness.

Q. Where would you like our church to be in five or ten years? What are your hopes and dreams?

Our church family would like to grow and increase the number of children and young families in our congregation. One member says, "I would like our church to be more vibrant than it is today with more of a mixture of young families and children to go along with our aging membership." At the same time, we fully appreciate the difficulty of attracting young families and we want to be open to other opportunities that may allow us to serve God and our community, as well as creating church growth.

Members would like to increase the number of musical and cultural opportunities at the church and a large number of people called for more mission projects and community outreach. One long time member commented "Going with a church group to New Orleans post Katrina was life-changing. To see the devastation up close and having an opportunity to give to people and the community was uplifting and meaningful."

Our Church



Like many mainline Protestant churches, the Presbyterian Church at Tenaflly was once one of the biggest churches in town with over 1,500 members. Mayors, professionals, businesspeople and many other prominent citizens were long time members. Over the last fifty years, though, the church has experienced a steep decline in membership.

PCAT Membership

1971	1695
1982	1028
1988	823
2020	240

As people died or moved away, not enough newcomers joined to take their places. To be sure, we experienced some controversy involving worship style and church leadership roughly 15 years ago but those issues have been resolved and they did not account for more than a small fraction of our membership loss. Rather, the bulk of the decline can be attributed to many of the same factors that have led to drops in many other religions in the U.S., including reformed Jewish synagogues, Catholic parishes and the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as other mainline Protestant churches.

Despite our long-term drop in membership, today, we are a strong, vital community, united in our faith, fellowship and a deeply held desire to help each other, our community and the world. We are a

congregation that rallies together whenever there is a need and we are comforted in the knowledge that there are many people in our church eager to lend a hand. We stick together through trying times like illnesses and surgeries, dropping off meals unexpectedly, and we share our joys like the birth of children or the celebration of a 98 year old member's birthday. There is a strong sense of family at the Presbyterian Church at Tenafly.

Our worship service unites us as well. We have a blended service, utilizing a traditional choir with an organist, along with a contemporary band. Our musicians are first rate and, in many cases, professionals who have performed on Broadway and other well-known venues. Our handbell choir is transcendent and our teenage performers are knocking on the doors of the professionals! We are indeed blessed. We are also blessed to have thoughtful, moving sermons which inform and comfort us.

Financially, PCAT is strong, even despite the raging Coronavirus pandemic. We have a good-sized endowment and we rent four of our properties to different parties, including a Korean church with whom we share occasional services and fellowship activities. Our pledge income is still significant, although it continues to drop as members leave the church. All of this supports our 2020 budget of more than \$560,000. Full financial details are in the Church's Annual Report, which is included in the appendices to this report. See pages 54 to 65.

Mission is an essential part of our church experience. PCAT members hear and respond to our church's call to reach out in love and compassion to a world in need. We work in a variety of ways to carry out that mission. We provide financial support and volunteers to the Family Promise Homeless Shelter. We give scholarships to our college students and send them care packages when they are on campus. We participate in the annual Crop Walk and support One Great Hour of Sharing. We raise money to send blankets to those in need, as well as volunteer to provide water and support to runners in Tenafly's 5K fundraiser. We have also worked on Habitat for Humanity projects and stage an annual musical production "Pennies for Heaven" which raises thousands of dollars for a variety of mission projects.

PCAT members refer to our young people as our most precious asset. Led by our Youth Coordinator, Sherrie Riley, our children and young adults participate in a wide of range of activities aimed at exploring and deepening their faith. Our smallest children enjoy 'life on a farm' with their puppet friend, Sebastian the squirrel, learning about God and his wonderful world. Elementary students are Biblical Scene

Investigators, using their skills to solve all manner of Biblical mysteries. Older students participate in retreats and prepare dinners for families at the Family Promise Homeless Shelter, as well as taking part in a trip last summer to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to attend the Sight and Sound Theaters' production of Jesus. Several high school students also attended the Triennium in 2019 held at Purdue University.

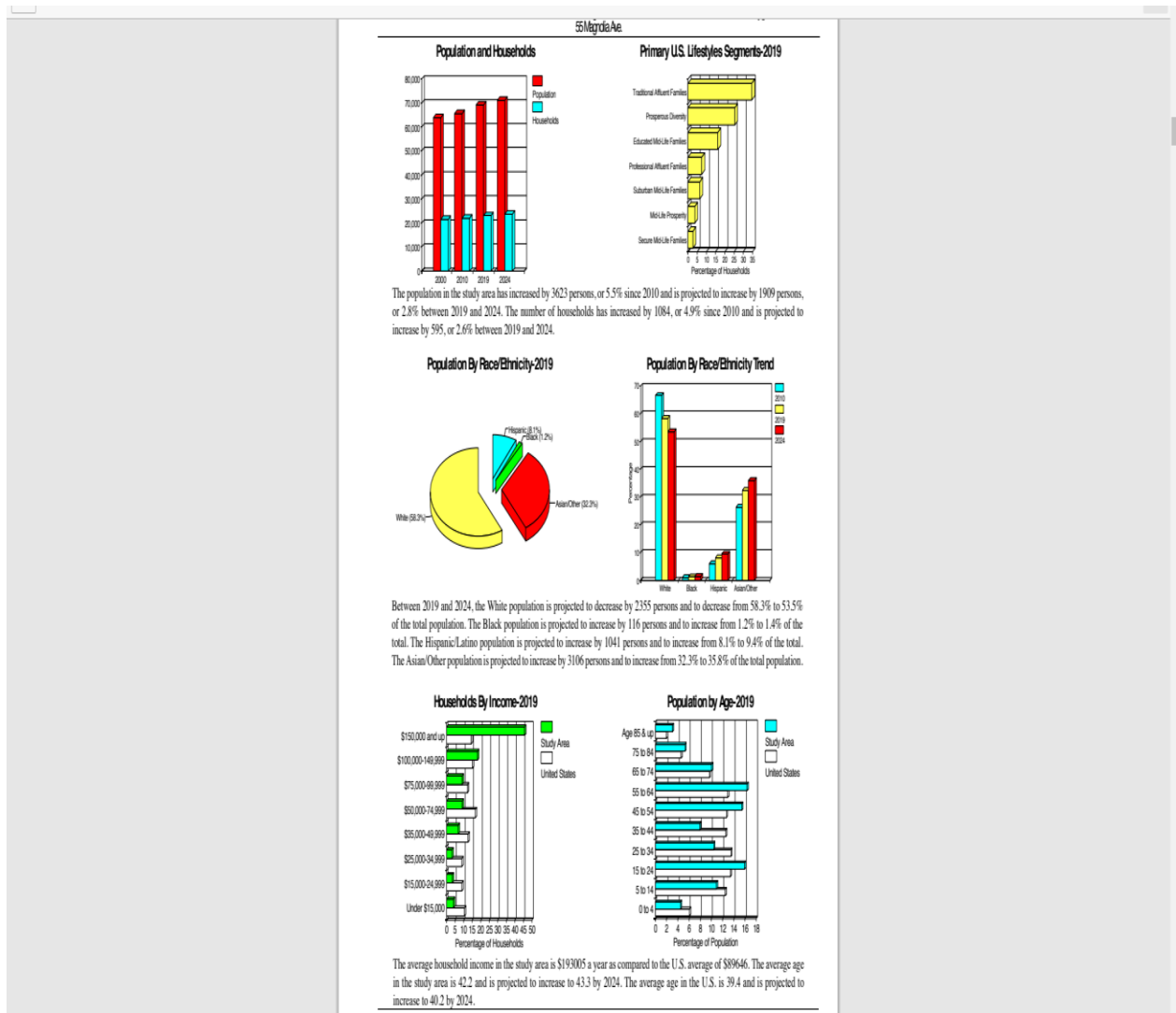
Our Deacons deliver flowers to those who are shut-in, to the sick, the bereaved and any other member of our church family who needs care. Additionally, the Deacons distribute Easter flowers and Christmas poinsettias to members who need special care and comfort during the holidays. They also organize a Pancake Breakfast and an annual Rummage Sale. The Deacons' Fund annually provides a summer scholarship for one of our young people, as well as contributions to the Center for Food Action in Englewood and the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Relief Fund.

There is no shortage of fellowship at PCAT either. From coffee hour after Sunday worship to special events, we enjoy each other's company. We gather for Christmas parties, New Year's Eve, and Thanksgiving, as well as Cinco de Mayo, Oktoberfest and even St. Patrick's Day. We have an active book group, the Presby Readers, and a Tuesday Evening Essence Group.



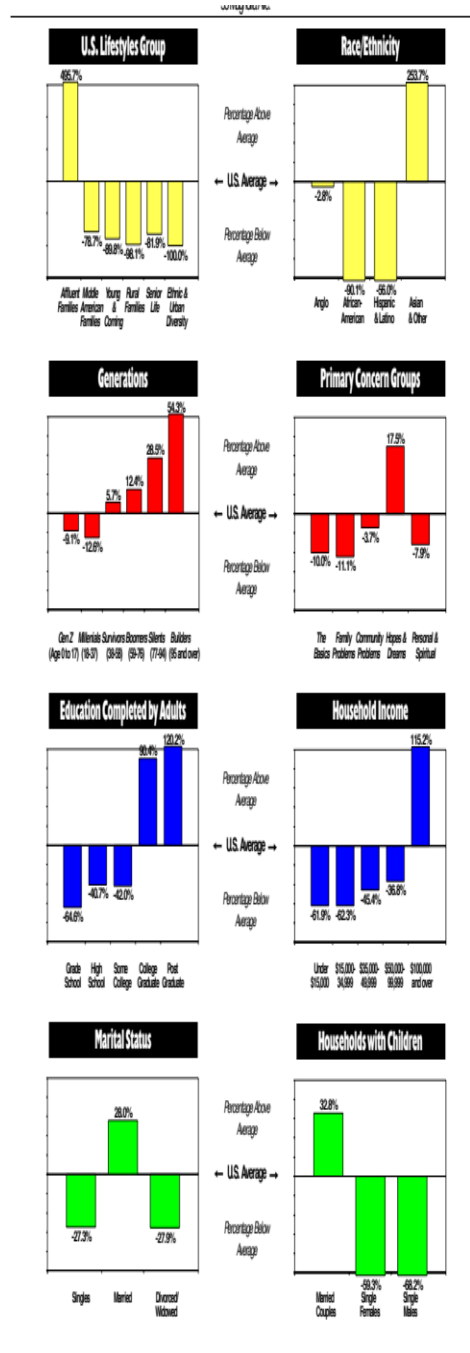
OUR COMMUNITY—NORTHERN VALLEY

As part of the mission study process, we commissioned a demographic report from the Percept Group. This Ministry Area Profile employed a custom polygon configuration focused on the Northern Valley region of eastern Bergen County, extending from the southern border of Tenafly and moving north along the Hudson River to the New York state line. The data show our region is relatively dense with a population of 69,155 people, while at the same time, the area's growth rate is low compared to the U.S. as whole, 8.3% versus 17.0% since 2000. Other dominant characteristics include a high level of affluence, a large number of traditional families and a generally diverse population with a slight white majority and a large Asian minority group.



Our church reflects much of our community as we are comparatively older and more affluent with a large number of traditional families. We are less diverse than the population as a whole, however. While we are blessed to have some Asian and Hispanic members, we are largely a white congregation.

Affluent Suburban Families



Our community is generally composed of affluent suburban families whose primary concerns are not basic needs, such as day-to-day financial worries, but rather are focused on finding enough time for leisure activities or becoming better parents. This is consistent with our congregation. One notable difference between the community and PCAT is the level of education. Percept describes our region as “somewhat high” in terms of education, while our church is exceptionally high with nearly universal college education and many members with professional or advanced degrees. This is noteworthy as it impacts the types of sermons and worship services our congregation expects and appreciates.

Community Concerns

Description	Study Area	U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
▲ Indicates the study area percentage is more than 1.1 times the U.S. average			
▼ Indicates the study area percentage is less than 0.9 times the U.S. average			
PRIMARY CONCERN INDICATOR			
Estimated 2019 Households Likely to Be Primarily Concerned With:			
THE BASICS:			
▲ Maintaining Personal Health	49.0%	43.5%	113
Finding/Providing Health Insurance	27.0%	29.0%	93
▼ Day-to-Day Financial Worries	24.1%	31.6%	76
▼ Finding Employment Opportunities	12.8%	14.4%	89
▼ Finding Affordable Housing	6.9%	11.3%	61
▼ Providing Adequate Food	3.8%	8.6%	44
Finding Child Care	6.6%	6.3%	105
FAMILY PROBLEMS:			
▼ Dealing With Alcohol/Drug Abuse	13.1%	16.7%	78
▼ Dealing With Teen / Child Problems	17.6%	20.7%	85
▲ Finding/Providing Aging Parent Care	20.7%	15.5%	134
▼ Dealing With Abusive Relationships	7.3%	11.4%	64
▼ Dealing With Divorce	2.6%	4.5%	57
COMMUNITY PROBLEMS:			
▼ Neighborhood Crime and Safety	23.6%	27.0%	88
▲ Finding/Providing Good Schools	26.3%	23.5%	112
Dealing with Problems in Schools	13.2%	13.6%	97
Dealing With Racial / Ethnic Prejudice	13.9%	13.1%	106
▼ Dealing With Neighborhood Gangs	3.0%	8.5%	35
▲ Dealing with Social Injustice	13.3%	11.3%	117
HOPES AND DREAMS:			
▲ Achieving Long-term Financial Security	58.7%	50.6%	116
▲ Finding Time for Recreation / Leisure	34.4%	25.3%	136
Finding Better Quality Healthcare	25.4%	23.9%	106
▲ Finding A Satisfying Job / Career	22.2%	19.3%	115
▲ Finding Retirement Opportunities	21.1%	18.9%	111
▲ Achieving A Fulfilling Marriage	26.3%	22.3%	118
▲ Developing Parenting Skills	19.1%	14.7%	130
Achieving Educational Objectives	7.4%	7.5%	99
SPIRITUAL / PERSONAL:			
Dealing With Stress	32.1%	29.8%	108
Finding Companionship	16.1%	17.3%	93
▼ Finding A Good Church	10.6%	15.2%	70
▼ Finding Spiritual Teaching	8.0%	12.9%	62
Finding Life Direction	15.4%	14.0%	110

Faith Involvement-Religious Preference

Description	Study Area	U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
▲ Indicates the study area percentage is more than 1.1 times the U.S. average			
↓ Indicates the study area percentage is less than 0.9 times the U.S. average			
FAITH INVOLVEMENT INDICATOR			
Estimated 2019 Households Likely to Be:			
Strongly Involved with Their Faith	34.3%	35.4%	97
Somewhat Involved with Their Faith	30.1%	29.9%	101
Not Involved with Their Faith	35.3%	34.7%	102
Estimated 2019 Households Likely to Have:			
Increased Their Involvement with Their Faith in the Last 10 Years	20.0%	22.1%	90
Decreased Their Involvement with Their Faith in the Last 10 Years	21.2%	23.7%	89
RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE INDICATOR			
Estimated 2019 Households Likely to Prefer:			
↓ Adventist	0.2%	0.5%	47
↓ Baptist	6.1%	16.1%	38
▲ Catholic	35.2%	23.7%	149
↓ Congregational	1.2%	2.0%	62
▲ Eastern Religions (Buddhist/Hindu/Shinto/Islam)	0.6%	0.4%	145
▲ Episcopal	4.1%	2.9%	144
↓ Holiness	0.2%	0.8%	21
↓ Jehovah's Witnesses	0.9%	1.1%	88
▲ Judaism	8.0%	3.2%	255
Lutheran	7.4%	7.2%	103
Methodist	10.0%	10.1%	99
↓ Mormon	0.5%	1.8%	30
↓ New Age	0.3%	0.6%	46
↓ Non-Denominational / Independent	3.8%	6.9%	54
▲ Orthodox	0.8%	0.3%	250
↓ Pentecostal	1.0%	2.4%	43
▲ Presbyterian / Reformed	8.1%	4.6%	177
Unitarian / Universalist	0.7%	0.7%	104
↓ Interested but No Preference	3.1%	3.9%	80
↓ Not Interested and No Preference	9.4%	11.1%	85

The religious preference chart on this page shows Catholics are the most preferred denomination in our region with mainline Protestant churches and the Jewish faith also attracting significant numbers of worshippers. What may be most important on this chart, though, are the data at the bottom of the page. Just 3.1% of people in our area have no religious preference but might be open to joining a church. That is a small number of people who might be eventually interested in the Presbyterian Church at Tenafly.

Worship Service Preferences

As the data below show, people in the Northern Valley prefer intellectually challenging worship services more than the U.S. as a whole. Further, they like traditional services more than the rest of the country. That does not mean, however, that people do not like emotionally uplifting or contemporary services. Indeed, a large number of people want a combination of both emotionally and intellectually challenging services, as well as traditional and contemporary worship.

Description	Study Area	U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
▲ Indicates the study area percentage is more than 1.1 times the U.S. average			
■ Indicates the study area percentage is less than 0.9 times the U.S. average			
WORSHIP STYLE INDICATOR			
Estimated 2019 Households Likely to Prefer Church Worship which is:			
PART 1:			
A. Emotionally Uplifting	25.5%	26.4%	97
▲ B. Intellectually Challenging	14.5%	11.1%	131
C. Both A and B	39.0%	39.2%	100
■ D. No Preference or Not Interested	20.6%	23.4%	88
PART 2:			
▲ A. Traditional/Formal/Ceremonial	26.9%	20.2%	133
B. Contemporary/Informal	25.6%	26.3%	97
C. Both A and B	26.3%	26.5%	99
■ D. No Preference or Not Interested	21.4%	26.9%	79
MUSIC STYLE INDICATOR			
Estimated 2019 Households Likely to Prefer Church Music which is:			
PART 1:			
▲ A. Traditional	30.6%	24.4%	125
B. Contemporary	20.4%	19.7%	104
C. Both A and B	29.4%	31.1%	95
■ D. No Preference or Not Interested	19.8%	24.8%	80
PART 2:			
▲ A. Performed by Others	21.7%	18.7%	116
B. Participatory	25.2%	22.9%	110
C. Both A and B	30.9%	32.2%	96
■ D. No Preference or Not Interested	22.1%	26.2%	84

Our church's preferences are similar to those of our neighbors in the Northern Valley. We had two worship services several years ago, an early morning contemporary service and a late morning traditional one. Eventually, the congregation agreed to combine the services and have one blended hour of worship. Combined worship has worked for us, perhaps for as much as any reason, it allows us to celebrate God together. We are also united in our strong preference for intellectually challenging services, which also uplift us emotionally.

Church Program Preference: Recreation

Households in our community say recreational programs would be most important if they were looking for a new church. Significantly more than the rest of the U.S., people in our area say youth social programs and family activities and outings are important. Active retirement programs are highly valued and, by the largest margin compared to the rest of the country, people say cultural programs, including music, drama and art, are extremely appealing. On the other hand, bible study groups are less important in this area than the U.S. as a whole.

Description	Study Area	U.S. Average	U.S. Comparative Index
▲ Indicates the study area percentage is more than 1.1 times the U.S. average			
▼ Indicates the study area percentage is less than 0.9 times the U.S. average			
CHURCH PROGRAM PREFERENCE INDICATOR			
Estimated 2019 Households If Looking for a New Church Likely to Express as Most Important:			
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:			
▼ Bible Study Discussion and Prayer Groups	26.5%	41.1%	69
▼ Adult Theological Discussion Groups	23.0%	22.5%	102
▼ Spiritual Retreats	9.9%	11.6%	85
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:			
▼ Marriage Enrichment Opportunities	15.0%	15.2%	99
▼ Parent Training Programs	6.5%	7.8%	83
▼ Twelve Step Programs	2.3%	3.5%	66
▼ Divorce Recovery	1.6%	2.4%	66
COMMUNITY/SOCIAL SERVICES:			
▼ Personal or Family Counseling	17.0%	22.5%	76
▼ Care for the Terminally Ill	10.7%	15.7%	68
▼ Food and Clothing Resources	7.7%	11.1%	69
▼ Day Care Services	5.9%	6.1%	97
▲ Church Sponsored Day-School	6.6%	5.7%	117
RECREATION:			
▲ Youth Social Programs	33.8%	29.7%	114
▲ Family Activities and Outings	39.8%	32.8%	121
▲ Active Retirement Programs	31.5%	26.8%	118
▲ Cultural Programs (Music, Drama, Art)	27.9%	18.9%	148
▼ Sports or Camping	5.6%	6.3%	89

Our church also responds favorably to recreational and social opportunities. Youth programs, such as hosting a fellowship brunch or a Chinese New Year's lunch, are extremely popular with our young people, as well as with the congregation as a whole. Fellowship activities, like our Cinco de Mayo and Oktoberfest celebrations, are very well attended and a cultural program a few summers ago was extremely well received. We also enjoy seminars on Sundays before worship services and Tuesday bag lunches during Lent.

DEMOGRAPHIC LESSONS FOR PCAT

Given the data that show just 3.1% of our neighbors in the Northern Valley might be interested in joining a church, growth at the Presbyterian Church at Tenaflly will be a challenge. At the same time, though, the demographic report uncovers several areas worth exploring. People in our area are concerned about young people, parenting and fulfilling marriages. They are interested in the arts, music and other cultural offerings. They are older than the U.S. as a whole and we live in an area with a large Asian population. Indeed, as mentioned, one of PCAT's resident tenants is a Korean church.

Increasing the number of programs and activities aimed at young families and youth could be one way of attracting more young people to our church. We already have a number of activities aimed at children and junior and senior high school students, such as retreats and feeding the homeless, but more can be done and in a more systematic way. We could, for example, schedule events throughout the year to make sure the church is doing something every month. We could also develop programs designed to help young families, including regular activities or parenting classes. Indeed, our members offered numerous suggestions during the Mission Study team's listening sessions for reaching out to young people and their families.

People in our region are also interested in cultural activities, including art, music and drama. This is an area in which our church excels. We have first rate music and a deep interest in the arts. A few summers ago, a visiting vacation minister at our church organized several trips to New York City museums and drama events. The program was extremely well received and could be easily resurrected.

Our members are overwhelmingly interested in attracting young families to our church but, at the same time, the population in our surrounding community skews older, as it does at PCAT. We should continue to think about and create innovative programs that will engage older people, because it will not only serve our members but could also be a blessing for others in our community.

The Northern Valley is home to a large Asian population and, as mentioned, PCAT rents space to a Korean church, Grace & Love. We have had picnics with their congregation and a few joint services. Even more could be done going forward, both in terms of fellowship and worship, bringing us closer together in God's love.

HOPES FOR A NEW PASTOR

Personal Compassion

PCAT members are hoping for a number of personal qualities in a new pastor. We want someone who is vibrant, smart and sincere with a sense of humor. Most of all, though, we want someone with compassion who understands people and can relate to our joys, sorrows, needs and dreams. We want a humble, warm, open and knowledgeable person who can reach out to us in love and compassion.

Deep Faith

Our church is also looking for a person who has deep personal faith, who is intellectual, well educated and spiritual. We have been blessed over the years with intelligent, inspirational sermons which have brought the scripture into our hearts and helped us deal with daily life. We understand it is a tall order but we would like a dynamic speaker who can challenge us intellectually and elevate us emotionally.

Interest in Church Growth

We understand church growth is challenging but we pray for someone who is truly interested in growth, especially in terms of attracting young families. Ideally, we would like someone with experience but, at the very least, we hope for a pastor who has the energy and commitment to work hard at helping us reach out into the community and spread the good news.

Welcoming

Community outreach is a specific trait several members mentioned. We hope our new pastor enjoys people and is comfortable meeting our neighbors in our multicultural community. We want someone who is outgoing and social and who relates to young people, as well as older people. Our hope is our new pastor will ensure our community knows our church doors are open and everyone is welcome to enter.

Interest in Arts and Mission

A strong interest in the arts is critically important. As a church, we place an emphasis on the arts and, because of the demographic report, we now understand the community around us is attracted to culture as well. We have an opportunity to spread the good news through the arts while, at the same time, continuing to enrich our own lives.

Several members are also deeply interested in mission. They have felt the impact of mission work in their own lives and would like to continue helping others in need. They would also like to help others experience the same uplifting impact of engaging in mission work.

NEXT STEPS

This mission study is just the first step in what will be a long journey for our church. We fervently hope and pray for more young families to join our church but we understand the realities of modern life in the Northern Valley. We want a new pastor who will be dedicated to helping us grow but we know we need to support him or her and not hold that person to an impossible standard. We also want to be sure we are open to new opportunities to serve our congregation and the community, even if they are not exactly in line with our dreams.

We anticipate the Session and our church will work together with the new pastor to help us achieve our goals, while also nurturing and supporting our congregation. We need to develop an action plan and approach our tasks with enthusiasm and energy so we give ourselves every chance to succeed in spreading the good news of the Gospel. As our members and the demographic report indicate, there are a number of areas we should actively explore in the coming months and years.

We need to develop a series of action steps aimed at increasing programs for young families and young people. We need to do more culturally to enrich the lives of our congregation and community. We need to support and engage older people and we should increase the amount of joint programming we do with our Korean friends, the Grace & Love Church. We need to do more with technology and social media to reach people who may not be paying attention to traditional communication channels.

We must work with our new pastor to ensure our congregation receives the support and understanding it needs and deserves as our members lead their lives in faith. We want to celebrate the Lord with joy and praise and lift everyone high with love and compassion.