



**Presbyterian Church at Bound Brook
Mission Study Report
Presented to Session June 14, 2018**

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Mission Study is to provide an overview of the current ministry and mission of the congregation, an assessment of the congregation's challenges and gifts with respect to the work of God for this time and place, and based on these findings to make recommendations for the near future of the congregation's ministry.

The Mission Study Team (Anita Milne, Presbytery; Chris Potter, Elder; Kathy Hobbs, Elder; Laura Shreve, Deacon; Jung Dettelback, Member; Ilse Pease, Member, Laura Still, Member, Christina Luna, Member) met 12 times beginning October 30 and concluding May 29. They prepared, conducted, and evaluated a survey of the congregation in which 189 people participated. They met with 8 small groups within the congregation and interviewed the staff. The team gathered demographic data and interviewed members of the community. Organizational structure, finances, and recent history were also considered.

The results of the small group sessions, the staff and community interviews and the congregational survey are collated within the Mission Study Report, as well as the Mission Study Teams' analysis and conclusions.

BBPC is a vital, medium-sized congregation. It is a regional congregation whose membership comes from many communities surrounding Bound Brook. As a whole the membership is mostly white, comfortably well-off and well-educated. This aligns with the community's perception of the congregation along with the oft-noted recognition that this church is LGBTQ inclusive.

The members value BBPC's strengths in the areas of music and youth ministries, and hands-on mission work. The congregation understands itself to be relatively healthy as evidenced in the large number of positive responses in the Hartford survey and in the comments during the small group gatherings. In this time of transition, the strong sense of hope and vitality is encouraging.

One of the largest congregational concerns was related to the budget, displaying a tension between wanting to meet the goal of equalizing operating expenses and yearly income, and not neglecting the programs that are important to the congregation. Another concern voiced by a few worshipers is the perception of social barriers to participation in both fellowship and the work of the church.

SUMMARY OF BBPC HISTORY

1685 – Scottish Covenanters flee Scotland after being persecuted for their religious beliefs on the ‘Henry and Francis’ ship and arrive in Perth Amboy making their way to the Raritan Valley and eventually Bound Brook, NJ to establish the Presbyterian Church at Bound Brook (BBPC).

Our church is rich with history connected with the Continental Army, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War and the historical events of NJ and the United States through time. Our history is well documented by local historians, historical societies and published works.

1963 – Dr. Joseph H. Kler, MD – member of BBPC – publishes *God’s Happy Cluster* commemorating 275th Anniversary of the church, archiving significant people and events in the life and history of the church.

1988 – Jane Spangler – member of BBPC – publishes *Windows of the Past* a tercentennial history of the church. She writes “The story of this church is a fascinating one.” And “It has brought me an appreciation of the fact that, almost without exception, this church has been blessed with outstanding ministers and members over the three centuries of its existence.”

Recent Pastors & Staffing

1976 – Present, Tom Rodgers, Director of Music

1986 – 2007, Martha Purkiss Riley, PT Choir Director

1988 – Present, Martha Costain, Church Secretary

1998 - 2008 Rev. Louis Kilgore was called to be our Pastor

2001 – Rev. Linda Owens hired as Interim Director, Christian Education

2008 – 2011 Rev. Brooks Smith serves as Interim Pastor

2009 – FT Sexton position changed to PT (20 hrs./week)

2011 – 2017 Rev. Dr. Nancy Birdsong called to be Sr. Pastor

2012 – Session sought permission to call Linda Owens as Associate Pastor

2014 – Rev. Linda Owens call to be Associate Pastor approved by New Brunswick Presbytery

2017 – Rev. Linda Owens, Acting Head of Staff

As of 2015, the congregation of BBPC has been served by 25 pastors.

Recent Programs, Missions & Social Issues

1999 – Hurricane Floyd – The church became a Red Cross shelter and a FEMA site and was instrumental in providing donations, food, shelter and volunteers and in coordinating services and support in Bound Brook.

2001 and 2003 - Mission Trips to Costa Rica working with Arbofilia, church raised \$10,000 for a matching grant from The Advanced WorldWorks Foundation completing 1,000 hours of community service in Bound Brook supporting “We Will Rebuild” initiative after Hurricane Floyd.

2002 - BBPC’s 1st Appalachia Service Project Youth Mission Trip, 21 Adults/HS Youth. The 16th Annual ASP Youth Mission Trip in 2018 has 84 participants registered.

2004 - The Presbyterian Pre-School is closed.

2004 - Mission Commission was very active in successfully assisting parishioner Vecky Goliath, originally from Indonesia, in successfully fighting his deportation notice. As a Christian, he would have faced almost certain death if he had been forced to return.

2005 - The Immigration Advocacy Office Casa de Esperanza, staffed by Joyce Phipps, Esq. was provided office space in the Prugh House until approximately 2012.

2006 - The Church Sexual Harassment Policy was instituted.

2006 - BBPC’s 1st Appalachia Service Project Adult Mission Trip, 8 Adults. Participants in this annual mission trip range from 8 – 14 people each year.

2007 - Church members visited Zambia through a World Vision sponsored trip to visit wells funded through sponsoring children in the area and youth fundraising.

2007 - Following a Noreaster and devastating flood in Bound Brook, the church was once again used as a shelter and flood recovery site working with the Red Cross, FEMA and other churches and organizations in the recovery effort including addressing issues of hope, emotional help and spiritual recovery.

2007 - An Ad Hoc committee was formed to aid the Perez Family of Bound Brook whose twin sons have severe disabilities. A \$9,000 renovation which included a handicap-accessible bathroom was completed.

2009 - The Session approved a motion to allow the use of the sanctuary for Commitment ceremonies and Civil Unions. This motion was passed by Presbytery General Assembly in 2010.

2010 - Mission Study “Imagine Bound Brook” included information re: hosting flood victims, Fish Hospitality, & Somerset Area Disaster Recovery Committee.

2013 – A motion is approved by Session to go to only one Service @ 10 am on Sundays

2013 – Annual ‘Church Has Left The Building’ event identifies projects and volunteers support Central Jersey Stream Team, local child care centers, day camps, Brook Theater, by cleaning and repairing grounds and buildings. Letter campaigns, dresses for girls in Africa, hygiene kits and backpacks for homeless persons are assembled and distributed to support national and global missions.

2013 – Same sex marriage recognized as legal in NJ.

2014 - Motion was approved by Session to allow the pastors to perform same sex marriages in the Sanctuary and on church property.

2014 – Presbytery General Assembly approves amendment to change description of marriage in the Book of Order. Majority votes received to ratify the amendment in June 2015.

2014 – Casa del Banquete signs their first Building Use Agreement with BBPC. It is believed that they started worshipping here at least 3 years before officially signing an agreement, but a date cannot be confirmed.

2017 – Mission Trip to Grenada – Presbyterian Church of Grenada to build a wall for a preschool playground at Samaritan Presbyterian School.

The Building

1896 – The cornerstone was laid on the corner of Mountain & Bound Brook Rd for a new building. Architect Oscar S. Teale, was engaged and designed the church based on a square plan on a diagonal axis, with a medieval revival style. The south-facing stained glass windows were designed and installed by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

1898 – The church building was dedicated, with a budget of \$35,000 being spent.

2004 - The Session hired the architectural firm DRG Architects to develop a historical preservation plan. The Capitol campaign supporting the task was to “preserve, prepare and build using technology and talents of the age”.

2005 - The church applied for registration to the NJ Historic Trust. Application was made for funding from the NJ Historic Preservation Trust for the development of a preservation plan and in December of 2006 a Historic Preservation Grant from the state of NJ was approved.

2006 - Interior building renovations began as the first phase of the historic preservation plan.

2007 – Presbyterian Church at Bound Brook added to the NJ and the National Registers of Historical Places.

2010 - The Cemetery Committee announced plans to develop the purchased Prugh Property as additional space for the cemetery.

2010 - The church applied for and received a 2010 NJ Historic Trust Grant of matching funds for external preservation including replacement of the original slate roof.

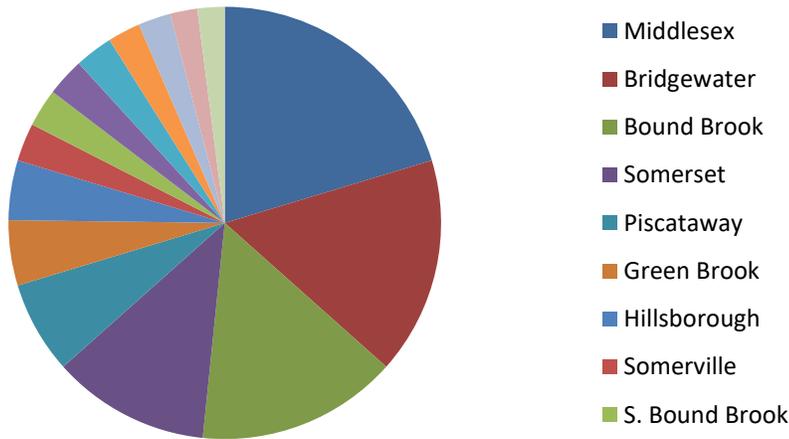
2012 - The new slate roof was finished as the last phase of the historic preservation plan.

2015 - After inspection of the roof trusses, it was found that one of the beams over the sanctuary had a large split in it requiring emergency replacement. The beams were reinforced while worship was moved to PFC. A building engineer recommended a Decibel limit for the sanctuary. As a result, Casa del Banquete services were relocated to the PFC.

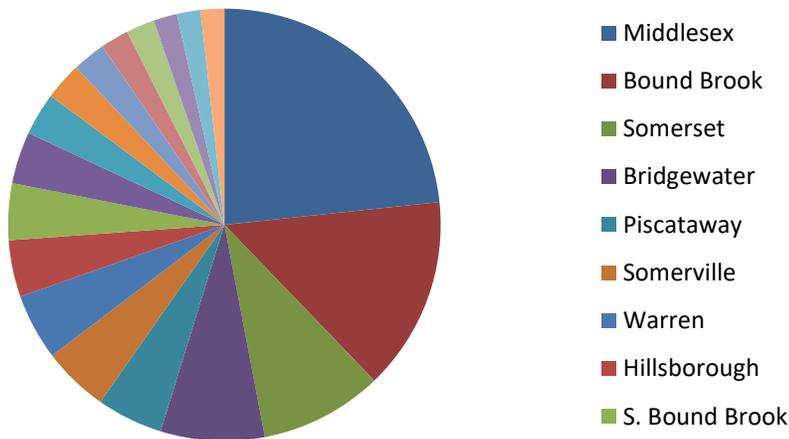
SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHICS

The Presbyterian Church of Bound Brook, located at 409 Mountain Avenue, Bound Brook, New Jersey, borders several communities. This section will reflect data from the following three communities which represent the most members of The Presbyterian Church of Bound Brook: Bound Brook, Middlesex, and Bridgewater. Within the communities, data is reported for sex and age, race, family status, and the average percentage of students in low-income families in the respective school districts. In addition, this report will identify data for the congregation of The Presbyterian Church of Bound Brook.

of Member Households by Zip Code



of Friends Households by Zip Code



Zip code	Town	Member Households	Zip code	Town	Friend Households
08846	Middlesex	50	08846	Middlesex	66
08807	Bridgewater	40	08805	Bound Brook	41
08805	Bound Brook	37	08873	Somerset	26
08873	Somerset	29	08807	Bridgewater	22
08854	Piscataway	17	08854	Piscataway	14
08812	Green Brook	12	08876	Somerville	14
08844	Hillsborough	11	07059	Warren	14
08876	Somerville	7	08844	Hillsborough	12
08880	S. Bound Brook	7	08880	S. Bound Brook	12
08835	Manville	7	08812	Green Brook	11
08812	Dunellen	7	08836	Martinsville	9
07059	Warren	6	08835	Manville	8
08822	Flemington	6	07060	N. Plainfield	7
07060	N. Plainfield	5	07920	Basking Ridge	6
08876	Branchburg	5	08901	New Brunswick	6
			08812	Dunellen	5
			07080	S. Plainfield	5
			08869	Raritan	5

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

based on information from the 2010 U. S. Census Bureau

Bound Brook

The total population of Bound Brook, at the time of the 2010 United States Census, was 12,254, with a median age of 36.4 years. Of the 12,254 total population, the number of males was 6,327, with the median age 35.1 years. The number of females was 5,297, with the median age 37.9. Of the total population, 11,820 stated they were of one race: White: 8,916, or 73%; Black or African American: 656, or 5%; Asian: 347, or 3%. Of the total population, 5,155, or 42%, were Hispanic or Latino. The total number of households represented was 4,329, of which 2,907 were family households. Of these, 2,006 were husband-wife families; 303 male householders with no wife present; 598 female householders with no husband present; and 1,422 nonfamily households. The 4,329 households included 1,553 households with individuals under 18 years of age and 1,090 households with individuals 65 years or older. The average household size was 2.81, with the average family size 3.25 people.

In the Bound Brook Elementary Schools, 77% of the students were considered to live in low-income families, according to GreatSchools.org.

Middlesex

The total population of Middlesex, at the time of the 2010 United States Census was 13,635, with a median age of 40.7 years. Of the 13,635 total population, the number of males was 6,602, with the median age of 39.5 years. The number of females was 7,033, with the median age 41.8 years. Of the total population, 13,360 stated they were of one race: White: 11,077, or 81%; Black or African American: 699, or 5%; Asian: 818, or 6%. Of the total population, 2,246, or 17%, were Hispanic or Latino. The total number of households was 4,984, of with 3,631 were family households. Of these, 2,789 were husband-wife families; 407 male householders with no wife present; 590 female householders with no husband present; and 1,353 nonfamily households. The 4,984 households included 1,743 individuals under 18 years of age and 1,441 individuals 65 years and over. The average household size was 2.73, with the average family size 3.22.

An average of the three elementary schools in Middlesex, indicated approximately 35% of the students were considered to live in low-income families, according to GreatSchools.org.

Bridgewater

The total population of Bridgewater, at the time of the 2010 United States Census was 37,972, with a median age of 41.7 years. Of the 37,972 total population, the number of males was 18,166, with the median age of 40.4 years. The number of females was 19,806, with the median age of 42.9 years. Of the total population, 37,292 stated they were of one race: White: 28,186, or 74%; Black or African American: 958, or 2.5%; Asian: 7,491, or 19.7%. Of the total population, 2,714, or 7% were Hispanic or Latino. The total number of households was 13,710 of which 10,196 were family households. Of these, 8,730 were husband-wife families; 362 were male householders with no wife present; 1,104 were female householders with no husband present; and there were 3,514 nonfamily households. The households included 5,538 with individuals under 18 years of age and 3,684 individuals 65 years and over. The average household size was 2.73, with the average family size 3.23.

An average of the six elementary schools in Bridgewater, indicated approximately 7% of the students were considered to live in low-income families, according to GreatSchools.org.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT BOUND BROOK

Number of Active and Affiliate Members

In addition to active members, there were 27 affiliate members. According to the survey, 95% of the respondents reported to be White; 1% reported to be Black or African American; 3% reported to be Asian; and 0% reported to be Hispanic. Of the respondents to the survey, 5% were high school graduates, 16% had trade or vocational school experience, 36% had college degrees, and 43% had post graduate work or degrees. According to the survey, 31% of the respondents were male and 69% of the respondents were female.

Age	# Active Members	# Survey Respondents	Age Range Survey
≤ 25 yrs	66	6	≤ 24 yrs
26 – 45 yrs	95	10	25 – 44 yrs
46 – 55 yrs	74	28	45 – 54 yrs
56 – 65 yrs	90	47	55 – 64 yrs
≥ 65 yrs	99	58	≥ 65 yrs

Communities in which Members of BBPC Live

Most of our members live in the three communities discussed above: Middlesex, Bridgewater, and Bound Brook. Middlesex has the most members, with 50 households

represented; followed by Bridgewater, with 40 households represented; then Bound Brook, with 37 households represented.

ATTENDANCE

Regular Weekend Services

Until mid-June, 2013, The Presbyterian Church at Bound Brook held three worship services: 5:00 p.m. Saturday evenings, 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday mornings. Beginning mid-June, 2013, the Church began having only two worship services: 5:00 p.m. Saturday evening and one service on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. The average attendance for the Saturday evening services from January, 2013 until mid-April 2018 was 18 people. This average does not include the major holidays of Christmas and Easter. The average attendance, excluding major holidays, for the 9:00 a.m. Sunday services from January, 2013, to mid-June, 2013, was 100 members. The average attendance for the 11:00 Sunday services from January, 2013, to mid-June, 2013, was 66 people. The average attendance for the 10:00 a.m. Sunday services from mid-June, 2013, through mid-April, 2018, was 120 people.

Our worship services are Saturdays 5pm and Sunday 10am. This was changed from three (3) services in mid-2013. The attendance numbers are:

Jan to June 2013	Avg Attendance
9a Sunday	100
11a Sunday	66
2013 - 2018	
5p Saturday	18
10a Sunday	120

Special Services

Average attendance since 2013 was determined for the major holidays of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday. The averages were as follows: Christmas Eve: 208; Christmas Day: 267; Ash Wednesday: 49; Maundy Thursday: 71; Good Friday: 55; Easter Vigil: 36; and Easter Sunday: 390. In addition, the combined service with Casa del Banquete averaged 127 in attendance.

SUMMARY OF CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

From mid-December 2017 to mid-January 2018, the Mission Study Team (MST) surveyed the congregation for perspective on who we are, who we want to be and the desired characteristics of a new pastor for BBPC. We drew survey items from the Hartford Institute for Religion Research's Inventory of questions developed to assist a congregation in a Pastoral Search.

Letters with the survey hyperlink and information were distributed to 389 addresses and emails, posted on bbpc.org, in the weekly bulletin and in the January Presbyterian. The MST offered paper surveys and computers were made available after Sunday services to provide easy access for as many people as possible. A total of 184 responses were received, giving a response rate of 48.9% which is higher than the typical response rate noted in Hartford Institute's Comparative Studies.

The majority of survey respondents (63%) were members for ≥ 10 years, traveled ≤ 30 minutes from home to church (93%), and attended worship 2-4 times per month or more (73%).

Most of those who responded indicated they are involved in one or less than one committee and/or group (55%), which is, again, comparable to the Hartford Institute's National Comparative Study of 193 church surveys. Many people (43%) had recently accepted office or other new responsibility after being invited to help. This topic was identified by the MST as a question for further clarification in small group sessions. The survey responses, verbatim comments and the subsequent small group sessions indicate that *people are seeking to be involved and will increase participation in committees and/or groups when invited in a personal and one-on-one manner*. This is an area that should be considered priority for leadership to study and act on in the future.

What We Do

The survey queries respondents for feedback and guidance on the Tasks of the Church and the results were overwhelmingly positive, indicating that the congregation was 'Very Satisfied' with many of the tasks listed for their consideration.

The tasks with the highest % of 'Very Satisfied' ratings were:

- Offering a worship service that provides a meaningful experience of God and the Christian tradition (82.93%)
- Engaging in acts of charity and service to persons in need (76.69%)

- Providing worship that expresses the Gospel in contemporary language and forms (74.39%)
- Providing a caring ministry for the sick, shut-ins and the bereaved (72.22%)

There are many things being done well at BBPC and 13 of the 16 tasks listed were rated ‘Very Satisfied’ by the responders. The leaders and congregation of BBPC should celebrate the overall positive ratings received by the tasks of the church.

There are two tasks that our congregation believes *needs more emphasis* (Q9) that were also identified as *tasks we do not do best* (Q10) and they would *most like to see strengthened* (Q11).

- Helping members discover their own gifts for ministry and service
- Helping members understand their use of money, time and talents as expressions of Christian stewardship

The consistent results in Questions 9, 10 and 11 identify areas that should be considered a priority for further study and focus in the near future.

How We Do Things

In survey question 12, respondents rated a number of functions and organizational aspects of our church. Again, the *results were positive* and the responses indicate that BBPC is *functioning well*. Especially in the areas of: members help each other in times of trouble (45.96% Strongly Agree/46.58% Agree), members are well informed about what the various committees and groups in the church are doing (8.07% Strongly Agree, 62.73% Agree), and members and groups get a lot of support and encouragement for trying something new in the congregation (8.07% Strongly Agree, 60.87% Agree).

The one function that was identified as *not performed well* at BBPC is: ‘activities taking place in the congregation are well publicized to the surrounding community’ (7.45% Strongly Disagree, 24.22% Disagree). This was explored further through interviews with key people in the local communities. It is not apparent that BBPC has a strong connection with the immediate local community of Bound Brook. It will need to be studied further for clarity on whether the congregation wants to strengthen their connection with Bound Brook and in what ways.

Who We Are

The responses about our identity as a church did not have any significant extreme findings identified. We are influenced by history/tradition (29%) as well as by contemporary ideas (39%). Our church’s approach to social issues is basically

educational, leaving any action to individual conscience (38%) and not as activists or taking stands on social issues as a congregation (33%).

We are involved with the community around the church in some ways (61%), such as our participation in FISH Hospitality Network, Soup Kitchen, Food Bank and Kids Connection. The majority of respondents (50.3% Strongly Agree, 43.4% Agree) are comfortable with the church's identity and have a clear understanding of what our church stands for (39.2% Strongly Agree, 55.1% Agree).

A significant number of people responded that being at this church has made a difference in their spiritual life (46.5% Strongly Agree, 49% Agree) and that they have a strong sense of belonging to this congregation (37.5% Strongly Agree, 49% Agree).

How We Worship

What makes a good worship service? It is essential that our worship is emotionally moving (47%), has parts especially for children (46%) and is intellectually challenging (38%). Important parts of worship seem to indicate a desire to maintain a traditional feel such as, silent prayer (63%), attention to communion/baptism (62%), corporate prayer (59%) and lay participation in leading worship (56%). Providing worship at times other than Sunday morning was identified as 'Not Very Important' by 47% of the responders. And the use of new/unfamiliar hymns and contemporary worship styles, music and language were both rated as 'Not Very Important' (48% and 44% respectively) and 'Downright Distracting' (8.2% and 4.4%).

We are 'Very Satisfied' with the music during worship, the overall worship service and the way our spiritual needs are being met in the worship service! This was heard in responses in the survey and throughout the small group sessions. The congregation was very positive in their responses to the current worship services. In the survey verbatim comments and in small group sessions, a few people mentioned that contemporary worship and music might draw a younger age group.

Our Future Pastor

A list of fifteen (15) priorities for a pastor were presented in the survey, asking respondents to rank the tasks Very High, High, Moderate, Low.

The top Very High Priorities identified in the survey were:

- Planning and leading worship sensitive to the needs of the congregation (48% Very High, 46% High)
- Providing administrative leadership for the congregation's ministry (38% Very High, 46% High)
- Emphasizing the development of members (27% Very High, 57% High)

- Developing and leading education programs for adults (12% Very High, 54% High) and for youth and children (22% Very High, 57% High) are also important priorities for our future pastor.

Pastoral counseling of members having personal/family/work related problems (37% Very High, 42% High) and visiting the sick, shut-in, bereaved (23% Very High, 61% High). This was further clarified in small group sessions as pastoral care, not counseling, and leadership should promote and leverage the role of Caring Ministry, Elders and Deacons to meet the needs of the congregation in this area as well.

While the many priorities identified seem a daunting task for a Pastor, directly involving laity in the planning and leadership of church programs and events (24% Very High, 51% High, 23% Moderate) was identified as a high priority as well. *The congregation acknowledges that lay leaders are an important part of the program, events and mission of BBPC. The Pastor who is a part of the future at BBPC has an invitation to empower us to lead with her or him.*

What traits do we see as desirable in a Pastor?

A sliding-scale of contrasting characteristics rated by the respondents in the survey identified the congregations' preferences as follows:

- Interactions tend to be thought-provoking and challenging (61%) or comforting and reassuring (39%)
- Welcomes new approaches and ideas (85%) or the way things have been done (15%)
- Tends to be a strong decisive force in decisions (34%) or encourages congregational and lay leadership decision-making (66%)
- Achieves set goals regardless of cost (33%) or the cost of goals sets priorities (67%)

Again, the invitation to empower lay leadership is extended to our new Pastor and the importance of budget and finance on our congregations' goals and priorities is established.

A new banner was posted at BBPC recently, "Why Church?", this is a banner that offers both reflection for those attending church and an invitation for those who may be curious. This is an example of the new approaches and thought provoking ideas that are a part of BBPC.



Why Church

What attracts people to our church and what keeps people to be a part of our congregation? The reasons most people were attracted to our church are; the minister (61%), the music program (53%), the worship style (50%) and the children & youth programs (42%). They stay a part of our congregation for many of the same reasons; the minister (79%), the music program (69%), the worship style (65%). In addition, they stay because their friends are here (52%) and the social outreach (44%).

Our Beliefs

54% of our congregation believes the Bible is the record of many different people's response to God and because of this, people and churches today must interpret the Bible's basic moral and religious teachings for themselves. 30% of the congregation believes the Bible is inspired Word of God and its basic moral and religious teachings are clear and true, even if it reflects some human error.

On the statement 'there is no other way to salvation but through belief in Jesus Christ' there is no consensus (Strongly Agree 19%, Agree 28%, Neutral/Unsure 24%, Disagree or Strongly Disagree 28%).

We believe (72%) human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life. We agree that social justice is at the heart of the Gospel (69%). The congregation is less sure of their beliefs on whether Jesus' resurrection from the dead was an actual event (34% Strongly Agree, 31% Agree, 28% Neutral Unsure, 3%

Disagree, 4% Strongly Disagree) or if the Bible has answers for all of the basic questions of life (9% Strongly Agree, 41% Agree, 29% Neutral Unsure, 20% Disagree) and whether all religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth (14% Strongly Agree, 41% Agree, 23% Neutral Unsure, 20% Disagree).

Demographics

The majority of the responders are White (95%), Female (69%), Over 45 years of age (88%) and Married (65%). They are educated at the College level or higher (79%), employed Full-time (48%) or Retired (33%) with an annual household income of >\$100,000 (61%).

Most of our survey respondents are on the Web at home or at the office daily (89%), use email daily (88%) and many are on Facebook daily (44%).

Verbatim Comments

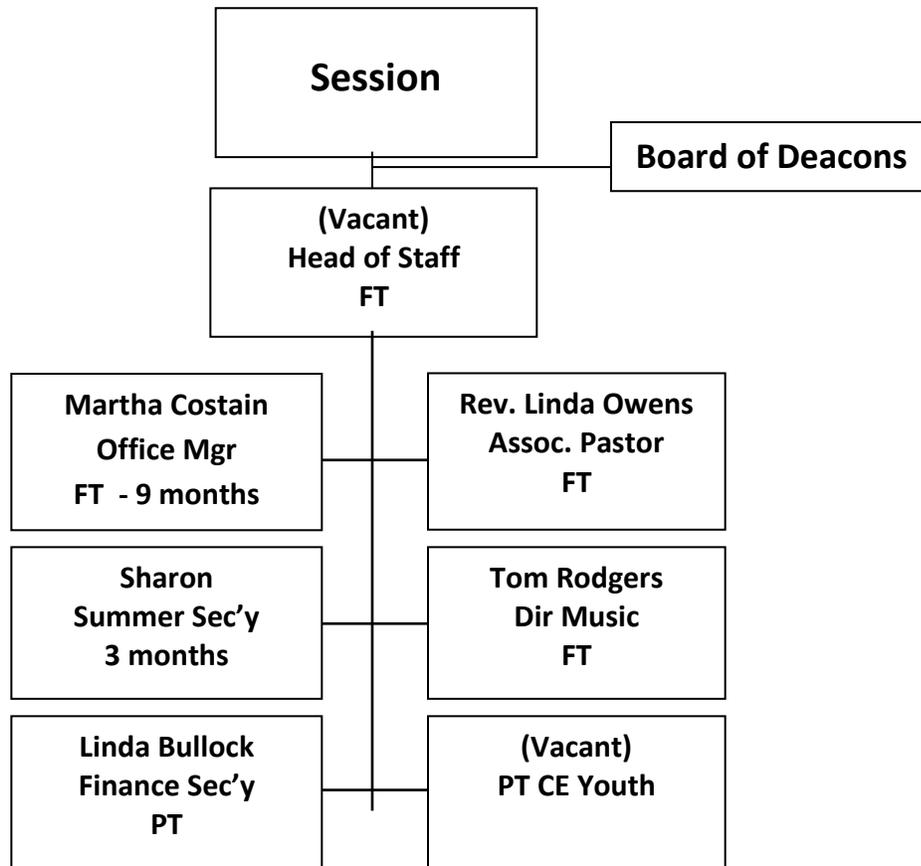
An area for free text comments was offered asking the respondents “What are your dreams, desires, and wishes for the church over the next five years?” and 111 comments were entered.

The MST reviewed the comments and identified a third area for further discussion in small group sessions. The perception of the budget/finance of BBPC by the congregation needed to be clarified.

Of the 111 comments entered, most reinforced the statistical findings noted in previous sections. In addition, several comments discussed concern for finances/budget, expressed a desire for Rev. Linda Owens to be the Pastor, and the hope that BBPC would grow in membership, leadership and mission.

There are some in the congregation who expressed a desire to be more connected but were not comfortable jumping in to volunteer or lead. This was brought up in the survey comments and also in the small group sessions. *It is important for us to look at the ways we welcome and get to know new friends. How do we introduce them to the different programs? How can they know the Elders, Deacons, Chairs and Commission members of BBPC? The survey results identified that the minister, music, worship and youth/children programs are attracting people to BBPC. It also showed that people stay a part of our congregation because their friends are here.*

Leadership, Organization and Outreach activities



Pastoral staff

Head of Staff - Currently vacant; Rev. Linda Owens is Acting Head of Staff

Associate Pastor – Rev.Linda Owens

This position is oriented toward youth and Christian Education.

Other Staff

Director of Music - Tom Rodgers

Office Manager - Martha Costain

Financial Secretary - Linda Bullock (PT)

CE/Youth Staff - (PT/Temporary) - New Position, Vacant
(Currently advertised, May 2018)

Church Officers

Session – 17 members, One vacancy as of May 2018

Clerk of Session - Paul Gindler

John Almendinger (19)	Chris Anderson (20)	Adriana Biedermann (20)	David Blakeley (18)
Doug Boleyn (18)	John Casale (20)	Steve Decker (18)	Dave DePierro (20)
Wayne Fabricius (19)	George Hellerman (18)	Kathy Hobbs (20)	Sal Lalama (19)
Dan Luna (19)	Chris Potter (19)	Gerda Reimer (19)	Connie Sopko (18)
Jeff Willard (18)			

Board of Deacons – 16 members, Two vacancies as of May 2018

Nancy Avery (18) -CS	Sue Danner (19) - S	Dan Richard (20) - VM
Kathy Luisi (18)	Cheryl Dolida (19)	Peggy Sakasitz (20)
Laura Shreve (18) - VM	Darlana Slevens (19)	Nagina Thomas (20)
Cathy Boleyn (18)	Michele Wallace (19) - T	Laura Heath (20)
Sandy Welliver (18)	Gail Smith (19)	
Deb Gugel (18) - M	Elaine Willard (19)	

M-Moderator, VM – Vice Moderators, T-Treasurer, CS – Corresponding Secretary, S-Secretary

Commissions & Committees

Christian Education Commission

Vacant (Chair)

Buildings, Grounds and Technology Commission

John Almendinger, (Chair) Dan Luna, John Casale (Co-Chairs)

Fellowship Commission

Connie Sopko (Chair)

Finance Commission

Jeff Willard (Chair). George Hellerman (Co-Chair)

Membership Commission

Kathy Hobbs (Chair). Doug Boleyn (Co-Chair)

Mission & Outreach Commission

Sal Lalama (Chair). Chris Potter (Co-Chair)

Personnel Commission

Gerda Reimer (Chair). Dave DePiero (Co-Chair)

Stewardship Commission

David Blakeley (Chair). Wayne Fabricius (Co-Chair)

Worship & Music Commission

Steve Decker (Chair). Adrianna Biedermann and George Hellerman (Co-Chairs).

Cemetery Committee – Subcommittee of Finance

Jeff Willard (Chair); The Cemetery is owned by BBPC, Session serves as the Trustee

Capital Campaign Committee – Subcommittee of Stewardship

Wayne Fabricius (Chair).

Nominating Committee

Vacant (Chair)

John Casale (Elder)

Mission Study Team (*ad hoc*, formed in October, 2017)

Chris Potter (Elder), Kathy Hobbs (Elder)

Mission/Outreach Activities of BBPC

(CURRENT activities only)

Mission/Outreach

South Bound Brook Soup Kitchen – monthly & regular volunteers participate

Food Bank Network of Somerset County

Presbyterian Educational Board (PEB) – Scholarships for Pakistani Girls

Appalachian Service Project – Adult (Winter), Youth (Summer)

FISH

Mar Elias School – Ibillin/Palestine (Ted and Jane Settle)

Nicaragua (Brooks Smith)

Kids' Connection

Middle Earth

Operation St. Nick

The Church Has Left the Building

World Vision Child Sponsorship: Zambia (Youth Group)

Special Offerings

Peace & Global Witness

One Great Hour of Sharing

Christmas Joy Offering

Deacons Offering - purchase of Shop Rite cards/other needs

Activities in Support of the congregation

Born-Legge Scholarships

Camp Johnsonburg Camperships

SUMMARY OF SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

Eight small group meetings were held after the church wide survey was completed. Although there was opportunity for free-form comment, the discussion was focused around three questions that arose from the survey results.

The first question asked about participation in the life of the church, the social life as well as the work of the church, and the barriers to participation. The second question asked for clarification as to the “pastoral care” component of the pastor’s job description. The third question attempted to understand further the perception of the church’s financial situation and the concerns and hopes around the budget.

Responses to the first question were extremely varied and basically ran the gamut from very easy to become involved to very difficult to become involved. Some members found the church very welcoming to the point of feeling overwhelmed by requests to become more active. Others felt it was difficult to join already established groups. This broad range suggested that responses were at least partially due to the individual personalities involved and how comfortable they were in joining new groups. There were several responses that the church had become more welcoming to newcomers as compared to 5-10 years ago.

The need for continued awareness of the importance of extending welcoming words to newcomers and personally involving new members was a common theme. There are always visitors and newcomers to the church so there is a need to maintain a welcoming atmosphere.

There was also discussion around some of the practical barriers to participation, particularly by those less physically mobile. Practical issues of time constraints and driving restrictions influenced activity in the church.

As a church with regularly revolving lay leadership and committee participation, we should always endeavor to prioritize outreach to our own members so that we are continually folding new members into the life of the church.

The second question regarding what pastoral care is expected from the pastor, however, elicited overwhelming agreement that pastoral care and not counseling was the expectation. It was generally agreed that long-term counseling was beyond the scope of what a pastor could reasonably perform.

In response to the third question, there was a wide range of understanding about the financial situation of the church. Concern about the finances of the church also varied; opinions ranged from optimistic about the reduced reliance on the endowment as compared to 10 years ago to pessimistic that there was a continuing reliance on the endowment for the annual operating budget.

There was, however, a common opinion that the church now has an opportunity to reduce our budget by streamlining our personnel. Nobody expressed the opinion that 2 full time pastors were needed in light of the church's financial situation and membership numbers. On the other hand, many people believe that this is a good opportunity to reduce the personnel costs to the church by utilizing part-time, specialized employees as needed. There was awareness expressed that this would require prioritizing of the pastor's responsibilities and that one person could not be expected to accomplish alone what two were previously doing. The regular attendees of the Saturday night service were mindful of the upcoming need for streamlining the pastor's duties and that the small numbers attending the Saturday night service made it likely that Session would need to evaluate its feasibility.

There was concern, however, about the importance of maintaining the quality and breadth of our programming without disregarding budget issues. The importance of the music program and youth programming was brought up many times.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

The Mission Study Team conducted interviews with five leaders and members of the community. Interviewees were:

Robert Fazen, Mayor of Bound Brook
Abel Gomez, President of Borough Council, Bound Brook
Jose Vasquez, Pastor, Casa del Banquete
Bonnie Trower – School Nurse, Mauger Middlesex School
Paul Cerito – Middlesex Police Dept.

In each interview, we asked the following questions:

Where do you see challenges and opportunities in the community?

What are the unmet needs?

What do you know about our church?

We summarize the responses to each of these questions below.

Challenges in the community

The poverty level of Bound Brook is over 20%; children are the most vulnerable. There are language barriers and other frictions related to ethnic diversity, immigration issues; and immigrants' difficulties with obtaining IDs, drivers' licenses, and insurance, all of which affect their ability to find and hold jobs.

Anecdotally, there is a higher percentage of apartment dwellers than in the past. Displacement of low-income residents and Hispanic-owned businesses due to new property development is a concern.

High property taxes are a major issue for Bound Brook property owners; this is an issue throughout New Jersey but is acute in Bound Brook.

In the Mayors' opinion "There is a low level of state funding for the Bound Brook school system". Gangs are present among school-age children and "access to drugs is easier than ever".

Kids (at upper elementary and middle school age) are struggling with many social issues and are at high risk for making poor life choices, getting into trouble, and getting involved in gangs, drinking, drugs and crime.

People don't communicate well with one another. They are more likely to call the police than reach out to a neighbor, according to the police officer who was interviewed.

In general, people are so busy with their own jobs that they do not have time to participate in community-building events. There are a variety of family models; single-parent; divorced; grandparents raising their grandchildren; and more traditional families in which a married couple is raising a family. The different languages in the community can make it challenging to communicate with parents and to get kids involved in activities.

Opportunities in the community

Bound Brook's flood control system is now complete. Downtown Bound Brook should no longer be threatened by floods. Despite funding issues, Bound Brook High School provides a high quality of education, with some notable successes. Bound Brook has decent recreational opportunities for families: parks, soccer facility and programs, etc.

A portion of the Hispanic population is gaining middle-class economic status. (Casa del Banquete members, for example). There are new housing developments in Bound Brook, both completed and in the planning stages.

According to Mayor Fazen, Bound Brook's population will increase 10-20% over the next decade. This will change the face of Bound Brook, socially and culturally. Teaching English to Hispanic kids is a goal worth pursuing, according to Mr. Gomez. An organization that communicates well with different cultures will be more successful with outreach to children.

Unmet needs in the community

(in addition to those stated under "Challenges")

Middle-school-age children would benefit greatly from participation in service activities on a small, local level; activities like this would teach children the value of helping others, build their self-esteem and give them the opportunity to meet new people. This was envisioned as a local-level version of ASP, geared to a younger age group.

How do you see this church?

We are seen as an older white church. We are known to be inclusive, and people notice that on our signage. Members of our church are known to be active in local community and civic groups. Our church is known for its history and its commitment to historical preservation.

Our church is seen as a shelter (Pastor Jose Vasquez, Casa del Banquete). Ted and Jane Settle reached out to Jose and his wife after the flood. "People cared, they opened the church doors and their hearts." Our church provided food and shelter, and Pastor Jose was encouraged to start his congregation here. That bond continues today.

“Your church seems to be a happy place with a lot of excitement and the kids seem to like it.” Some in the Middlesex community know our church through ASP and the positive experiences and growth experienced by their young people who participate in ASP through BBPC. Some in Middlesex are aware that Middlesex residents are active in our church, and that our church appears to be more active than the Middlesex Presbyterian church.

People notice the banners outside our church, as well as outdoor events including singing, tables out on the lawn, etc.

Overview of open-ended comments

Both Mr. Fazen and Mr. Gomez felt it would be beneficial to us and to the community if we were more active in community-wide events. Mr. Fazen suggested that we should consider hosting events that reach out to the surrounding communities, and perhaps have an outdoor service that would be outreach-oriented.

According to Mr. Gomez, the most effective thing we could do would involve Spanish-speaking staff and programs. We could reach out by holding summer camps for the children so that there is a place for them to go while the parents are working. If we let Mr. Gomez (or presumably, the Borough office) know of our programs such as Kids Connection, they could be added to the Borough of Bound Brook website. He also suggested holding Kids Connection on Friday nights so that the parents could have time for a “date night”.

Casa del Banquete: Since the structural beam problem occurred in our sanctuary last year, the Casa congregation has been asked to meet in the PFC gym. There is concern that their sound system would have an adverse effect on other beams in the Sanctuary. Pastor Jose Vasquez reports that during the summer, the heat in the gym can be unbearable due to the lack of A/C. He has had a drop in the number of congregants due to this, which also affects their finances.

Mr. Gomez urges us to “Engage the whole community.” The barrier is simply language. There are 5000 Spanish speakers in Bound Brook; he suggests we should learn Spanish and hold a service in Spanish. (It’s unlikely we would do this, given our partnership with Casa del Banquete. We would not want to be seen as competing with them. But we should be mindful that there may be people in the Hispanic community who are more inclined to our flavor of Christianity than that of Casa.) Mr. Gomez cautioned us against pigeonholing the Hispanic community’s religious preferences as “either Catholic or Evangelical.”

Implications

Our church serves several local communities, as a church home and as a participant in meaningful local outreach and service. We are well-positioned to develop deeper and stronger ways to serve in the community, but to do so might require a commitment to development of Spanish-language capabilities by a cadre of members (and staff?).

There are competing dynamics in Bound Brook, between (1) a desire for development and improvement of real estate, and (2) affordable housing and opportunities for a lower-income largely Hispanic and African-American population.

One of our most important positive impacts on the local community has been our relationship with the Casa del Banquete congregation. We need to pay attention to this, and continue to nurture it. We need to be attentive to the impacts of the limitations of our facilities on their ability to worship and thrive.

Drugs and gangs are among the deep problems faced by youth and adults in our communities. BBPC should continue developing program(s) that will effectively address these issues.

BBPC is known for its deep and historic ties to the community, and for its inclusivity. The events that take place outside our walls are noticed. A more comprehensive strategy of engagement with community activities could potentially go a long way toward strengthening our ties to local communities.

SUMMARY OF STAFF INTERVIEWS

The following is a summary of the interviews of the church staff; Martha Costain, Office Manager; Tom Rodgers, Director of Music; Rev. Linda Owens, Associate Pastor, Acting Head of Staff.

How do you see our church at this time?

The church is in a good, healthy place, with the members voicing few concerns during this transition period. BBPC offers traditional worship services, yet open to innovative ideas to be more progressive and inclusive. We make an effort to welcome visitors and new members. However, at times, we do not always continue to reach out to help our new members become involved in the activities of the church.

Tom Rodgers feels that BBPC will benefit from designing a five-year plan to help members and staff determine specific programs on which to focus. It is better to have fewer programs which are done well, rather than a large number of programs which are not carried out successfully.

What are your concerns for our church?

The staff is concerned about maintaining the programs we currently offer, especially with the financial challenges. The staff is aware that they, as well as the various commissions, are attempting to keep costs down. It is good that we have recently been withdrawing lesser amounts from the endowment fund. However, our church needs to carefully determine how to channel our resources to strengthen the viable programs, such as music, mission, and youth programs.

What are your hopes for BBPC?

The staff would like to see the church find ways to reach our younger members, the millennials, and their families. The church needs to keep in contact with the younger members, even if they are not currently attending services and activities, in the hopes that they will, at some time, become more involved. The church needs to communicate better with all of our members to help them be aware of and understand programs that are occurring. The Rev. Linda Owens hopes to focus on three areas for mission outreach: the Bound Brook community, ASP, and Pakistan.

IN CONCLUSION

Overall, we do not envision a change of direction for the congregation. Rather we believe that the leadership should focus on maintaining dynamic worship, while providing for strong youth ministry and hands-on mission work. There are areas that should be addressed and we recommend targeted efforts in the next year with respect to these concerns.

As we envision it, in the next year the leadership of the church should focus on:

STAFFING TARGET: Providing for change

Personnel, session, and the pastor need to prepare for current and future staffing changes. The current staffing issue is the change from a two full-time pastor congregation to one full-time pastor. We believe this is possible with the addition of some part-time staff to support Christian Education, the youth program, and perhaps some pastoral care.

This will involve educating the congregation to accept the church as medium sized, no longer a large congregation and thereby able to understand the reduced scope of pastoral duties for the full-time pastor. In tandem with this is the need to empower more of the laity to lead. This will require providing effective resources/opportunities for leader training. Also, the training should be fun!

RELATIONSHIP TARGET: Getting more people involved in the life of the church

We recommend improved fellowship opportunities focused on getting members to reach beyond their usual relationships, e.g. something similar to the Carpenters Table dinners.

In addition, we need to enfold willing congregants into the work of the church. A place to begin would be an exercise where people could explore their talents and interests as they correspond to church ministries. In conjunction with this, commissions need encouragement and help in recruiting new workers for specific tasks.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES TARGET: Refining goals

While a general goal of moving to a balance of income and expenses has been stated, creating specific targets towards that goal for the next five years (for example) would help the session and the commissions to better adjust their expectations and do the work

to achieve financial targets while maintaining the most important programs. This may involve some pruning.

Again, in tandem with new targets and reduced staff expense would be a dynamic stewardship campaign, one that reflects the same strengths as the current capital campaign.

COMMUNICATION TARGET: Internal communications

In two areas we see room for improvement. Some people express concern that they don't know what the church is doing. Others don't know who to call for information or help. We strongly support continuation of the new social media (Facebook) messaging. Also helpful would be updating information resources so that they are user-friendly and available to everyone.

MISSION TARGET: Bound Brook

The mission of the congregation is focused nationally through ASP and globally on Pakistan (primarily by sending money and through education/awareness). Locally, we are set in Bound Brook, a town that is 40% Hispanic; yet we had no Hispanic respondents to our congregational survey. These facts should not deter us from being active in the community. Our efforts, so far, have gone to supporting Operation St. Nick, FISH, Kids' Connection, the SBB Soup Kitchen and Food Bank Network of Somerset County. There is more we could do. However, following up on our conversations with members of the community, we believe it is not our place to come up with new projects. Instead we recommend identifying ways to more effectively connect with community leaders as a resource for their work in providing opportunities and meeting needs.

Also, it is vitally important to tend and strengthen the relationship with Pastor Jose and the Casa del Banquete congregation. This includes educating the congregation on the value of the relationship. We believe that the joint worship service needs to be eliminated or be made much better at reflecting and connecting the two congregations. We see the strongest connections coming through efforts like the adult class joint dinner and conversation.