

Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church

8605 East County Road A
Janesville, WI 53546

TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM CHURCH MISSION STUDY 2021

This study was put together and written by various people on the Transitional Team comprised of Ruling Elders: Nicole Barlass, Sylvia O'Connor, Kathy Crandall, Ruling Elder/ Clerk of Session. Members at large: Scott Moebius, Marcus Scharine, Nancy Sonka. Interim Pastor Rev. Gail Monsma

We trust this Mission Study will give a glimpse into our congregation—both the blessings and challenges we face as we move forward in calling an installed pastor. At the same time, we seek to convey the hope we have in our future, a vision of what we can become, along with our faith and trust in our God as we seek to follow the Risen Christ with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Church Mission Statement:

The members and friends of Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church worship God our Creator, believe in salvation through Jesus Christ His Son, and live daily with guidance from the Holy Spirit. We share His message of love and salvation with others through worship, prayer, fellowship, and service.

Rock Prairie Presbyterian Staff and Session and Committees 2021 Membership 365

Staff:

Interim Pastor: Rev. Gail E Monsma
Office Administrator: Heather Lopez
Bookkeeper: Carol Sauer
Music Director: Krista Jones
Music Accompanist: Sylvia O'Connor

Session—12 Elders with the following committees:

- Fellowship Ministry
- Worship Committee
 - Covid-19 sub-Team
- Personnel Ministry
- Christian Education Ministry
- Adult Spiritual Formation (will be added in January 2021)
- Budget and Finance Ministry
- Communication & Outreach Ministry (combining in 2021):
- Nominations Ministry
- Mission Ministry
- Stewardship Ministry:
- Building & Grounds Ministry
 - Technology Team
- Youth Ministry
- Transition Team (Interim), three elders and three at large members

Board of Deacons (12)

Legacy Board for endowment funds

Additional Groups

Tuesday Crafters –make items for Fall Charity Bazaar
Sunset Circle
Women's Retreat
HOPE Adult Mission Trip
Men's Breakfast
Compassionate Cooks (for those needed meals)
Prairie Press, monthly newsletter group
Welcome Writers
Community-wide efforts are handled by volunteers:
Crop-Walk
Milton Food Pantry
Salvation Army
ECHO Janesville (Everyone Cooperating to Help Others)
Habitat for Humanity
Meals on Wheels

Background on Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church

(A fuller history from our Sesquicentennial in 1997 is available from the church.)

Rock Prairie United Presbyterian Church was formed in July of 1847 within farmland and what is known as the Rock Prairie in Rock County, WI. The area was formed by receding ice-glaciers leaving behind prairies and rolling hills perfect for farmlands.

In 2021, there are still generations active going back to the founding families. We have a strong history that has strived to remain faithful to God through the love and message of Jesus Christ. The church has a reputation for strong preaching centered in Christ and excellent music. Christian Education and growing in one's faith have always been important here. Mission is a vital part of this church! For years we have offered youth and adult mission trips, and we give nearly 20% of our annual budget toward mission endeavors locally and through the national church.

During Covid-19, the church pivoted to on-line worship and education for all ages. Our offices at church closed and worship services went on-line mid-March 2020. We began in-person worship on Palm Sunday 2021, following local health department guidelines along with the CDC. Our Christian Education programs remained active through adult and children Zoom classes. Moreover, children had monthly packets delivered to their homes that coincided with the weekly Zoom classes. Youth and adult mission trips did not happen in 2020; however, we collected items for local charities with drop-offs at the church.

In 1999, a pastor left having served for nearly 30 years. Under his leadership the church more than doubled in size and a new church facility was built. He was known for his preaching and presence in the surrounding communities. Many in the church continue to hold fond memories of this time; some have trouble moving past these memories.

An interim pastor followed. Then the church called a pastor who was more conservative than most of the congregation. He ended up leaving after only a few years taking many members with him. Presbytery helped bring in another interim who brought balance back to the church and served for two years.

The next pastor served for 13 years from 2006 to 2020. During this time, the church remained active in the community and missions. Many people admired this pastor, still others compared him to the pastor who left in 1999. During this time, the church had two stated supply associate

pastors, both stayed less than two years. In August 2019, this pastor signed a behavioral contract to deal with his alcoholism and poor decisions made while working; this included out-patient treatment. In January 2020, after non-compliance with this agreement he resigned. Some felt he should have been given a medical leave; others felt the church had been more than generous. This left congregants with mixed emotions including feelings of anger, betrayal, and divided feelings.

The church was utilizing pulpit supply pastors when Covid-19 hit in March 2020 causing the church building to shut down. Pulpit supply pastors continued to serve virtually for eight months until October 2020 when an interim pastor arrived. She has been working to bring about stability, trust, and healing while working closely with the leadership of Session and the Transition Team to help navigate this interim time. This has also been a time to assess where we are while realizing the incredible blessings this congregation has. The church has completed a Congregation Assessment Survey through Holy Cow Consulting and held Focus Groups which looked at the past and toward the future.

We are a resilient and look forward to a new installed pastor to work with us, as together we move forward in hope and faith following Jesus Christ.

Demographics

Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church is located 5 miles from the eastern edge of Rock County Wisconsin. The church property is surrounded by a 1,000-acre cornfield. Although approximately one third of the church’s active membership is agriculturally related, its culture and image is “The Church on the Prairie”. The congregational environment draws not only from large rural farms, both crop and dairy from multi-generational families and rural manufacturing families, but also from people living in Janesville and other nearby cities working in various professions. About 87% of the membership travels to church from over 5 miles away from 3 nearby cities, Janesville pop. 65,615, Milton pop. 5,566 and Whitewater pop. 14,887, where there are professionals, retired merchants and trades people, and many educators from nearby schools and colleges. Altogether, members come from about 50-mile radius. We are a “destination church.”

The recent congregational membership of 367, pre-covid, is comprised primarily of Caucasian families and individuals, yet the demographics of the local communities are becoming more diverse. Approximately 3% of the congregation is of the ages 0 to 24, 11% from the ages 25 to 54, 11% from the ages 55 to 64 and 75% from the ages greater than 64.

Financial Position July 31, 2021

BALANCE SHEET as of July 31, 2021:

Checking Account	\$141,086
Investments	<u>282,685</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u><u>\$423,772</u></u>

Breakdown of Committed Funds to be Paid out of Checking and Investments:

Cash Available for payment of Payroll and Current Budget Expenses	\$74,204
Funds Dedicated and to be paid for a Specific Purpose	278,594
Invested Funds Undesignated for a Specific Purpose	<u>70,973</u>
Total Cash and Investments	\$423,772

2021 Total Budget is \$307,208

Year To Date July 31, 2021 Total Income vs Total Budget:

Total Year to Date Income over Expenses	-\$ 2,024
Total Year to Date Budgeted Income over Expenses	-\$27,208

This is not an unexpected shortfall for July. The church has a strong financial history of generosity.

Music at Rock Prairie Church

Rock Prairie is a musical church. We enjoy singing hymns and responses together. Both our Holy Cow survey and focus group discussions showed that we place high value on music as an essential part of our worship, and we couldn't wait to be together again after the recent Covid-19 restrictions to raise our voices in singing. The choir re-started in September 2021 and is wearing masks, as are all worshippers.

We have a long tradition of appreciating choir, piano, and organ music in a wide variety of styles. Many people can read musical notation well enough so that when unfamiliar hymns and responses are presented, we still sing with gusto.

In our congregation and local community are many talented musicians. In recent years, we "make music to the Lord with the sound of singing and instruments": vocal solos and ensembles, harp, flute, cello, violin, harmonica, guitar, drums, trombones, trumpets, French horns, and even the Jazz for Jesus ensemble.

For many years, Rock Prairie was known for the annual Patriotic Concert (a fundraiser for the local military veterans' charity), and then the Mardi Gras Concerts attracting hundreds of listeners and raising thousands of dollars.

For the pre-recorded church services when our church was shut because of Covid-19 restrictions, many people came forward willingly to provide special music each week so we could praise God together through music.

Work done with Holy Cow Consultants

In April of 2021, Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church with support of the Presbytery used Holy Cow Consultants to administer an online Congregational Assessment/Survey. It was a detailed survey with over 100 questions, most following the Likert scale. It is "snapshot" of our congregation at a particular time and place, yet it provided very helpful information about us concerning our theology, views of worship, mission, communication styles, etc. More details are available through the church office. What follows is a summary made by Rev. Ann Gibbs.

Summary of the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) Results By Rev. Ann Gibbs, Associate for Ministry Vitality, Milwaukee Presbytery

We had excellent participation (130) – representing 87% of our average Sunday attendance. The threshold for valid and reliable data is 33%. This response enables us to hear from and respond to a broad, representative base of our congregation, so thank you for participating. We also have some conversation partners. Our responses were compared to responses from several hundred congregations that have taken the CAT from across the country over the past 1-2 years. This gives us an actual apples-to-apples comparison and perspective on how we are doing as compared with other churches.

What did we learn?

You assessed our congregation in the following 8 areas: Hospitality, Morale, Conflict Management, Governance, Spiritual Vitality, Readiness for Ministry, Engagement in Education, and Worship and Music. This revealed areas of strength and room for growth.

The area that received the **highest ratings** as compared to all other congregations using this tool is **Spiritual Vitality** (which measures the degree to which members believe that their faith is central to their lives – this is an individual measure of relationship with God). Members also perceive that the congregation is engaged in warm **hospitality**. First and foremost, we report that we are a welcoming community and enriched by those from many different walks of life. We feel our congregation has brought meaning to our lives that a friendly atmosphere prevails and that we show genuine concern and care for one another in times of need. **Readiness for Ministry** is also an attribute of our congregation (how we engage and support our members in the ministry of this congregation). We recognize that ministry to those in our congregation and to those in the world are very important to our identity as a community of faith. Our results demonstrate that members feel they are assisted in identifying their call to ministry; are prepared to engage in active ministry; supported in their efforts and that there are a number of opportunities to serve. **This is to be celebrated because it affirms the work we do being a Christian witness in the world.**

The areas that show room for growth are Conflict Management, Morale, Governance, Worship and Music, and Engagement in Education.

Conflict Management measures the degree to which members believe that conflict is appropriately managed and, where possible, resolved. The congregation's experience of conflict is the major concern revealed by the CAT. We learned that the Conflict Management scores and our recent experience of conflict actually 'color' the results of the entire CAT report. The nature of this conflict is related to what is called an "addictive" system. When a key leader of a congregation is dealing with an addiction, the entire congregation is impacted (much in the same way as a family). Our most important work during this transition time will be to do the work of healing and reconciliation so we can move forward as a healthy congregation. This is important work prior to the calling of the next Pastor.

Morale (the persuasive engagement of members in the mission of the church) scores demonstrate that a majority of our members are "on the fence" or hold a "wait and see" attitude. In part, this can be attributed to our clergy transition time as well as the conflict represented in our recent history.

Governance measures the degree to which members believe that the decision making and processes of the church are open to their concerns. Overall, our scores indicate that the congregation positively perceives our current governing leadership; that members are being heard; and that decisions are being made in a responsible way. **There was overwhelming appreciation for the work of the session and staff providing worship, care, and guidance through this time of COVID.**

Worship/Music are the primary indicators of congregation vitality. Our results offer us an opportunity to talk about our worship experiences and where we might focus energy to improve the experience for the greatest number of people. This should prove challenging and exciting as our congregation is both theologically diverse and, from comments on worship, find meaning in a variety of worship and music styles. This means that what feeds you in worship may be very different from the person in the next pew. We are further challenged in that we are a settled congregation (we recognize the need for change in some areas but don't really want to embrace it.) It is important to explore this not only our personal and communal enjoyment of worship but also as we seek to welcome others. It's also important for our next pastor to know as in our worship and music we are not a "one style fits all" congregation.

Engagement in Education measures our motivation for learning and spiritual formation and the quality of our educational programming. We learned that we are highly motivated to life-long learning/formation. But as with worship and music, the quality of our programming will require conversation as to how we make improvements that meet the needs of the entire congregation.

Not surprisingly, we are a highly educated congregation, and therefore, value and seek more opportunities for learning and formation.

What else did we learn?

Our congregation's culture is what is described as Hearth and Home ¹ Members of the church like to find familiar ways of doing things and stick with them. On average, our church is theologically more traditional/orthodox. The combination of a settled approach to change and a more traditional theological perspective gives the church potential strengths in the areas of moral and spiritual clarity, stability in the face of chaotic, societal change, and maintenance of important traditions. On the other hand, the church may find it difficult to make the changes required to achieve its goals without triggering debilitating conflicts. And, while we are predominately a Hearth and Home congregation, about 40% of our congregation are more progressive in their theology. This theological diversity can be a great strength if we embrace it, witnessing to the love of Christ in unity not uniformity in a divided world. It is also, *again*, an important facet when calling our next pastor.

We also learned about our congregation's climate.

Church climate is measured by two questions: One is member Satisfaction (sense of well-being, peace, lack of discord); and the other is Energy (passion/action for mission). We learned that compared to other congregations like ourselves, Satisfaction and Energy are low-average. In both cases, the majority of our members are "on the fence" about Satisfaction and Energy. We are satisfied by some things and dissatisfied by others; we are energized by some things and not by others. These scores indicate that we are a **"recovery/re-invention" church**. Our work is to discern our identity and common mission/vision; to clarify the promises we make to our members and to those we seek to serve in our community. What will we "deliver" in the name of Christ Jesus and "why"? The scores on the 'mission church profile' section of the questionnaire further represent our need to understand what we mean by 'missional' and how we will go about a unified sense of mission/ministry.

In addition, we learned those aspects of our communal life that "drive" our Satisfaction and Energy. We learned that we are most satisfied when:

- In important decisions in our church, adequate opportunity for consideration of different approaches is provided.
- The leaders of our church show a genuine concern to know what people are thinking.
- We are willing to adapt our worship to the needs and circumstances of the people we want to reach in our local community.
- Problems between groups are resolved through mutual effort.
- Worship is exceptional in both quality and spiritual content.

We learned that we most energized when:

- The whole spirit of the congregation makes people want to get as involved as possible.

Worship is exceptional in both quality and spiritual content.

We also learned of our congregation's top priorities.

1. Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people.
3. Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation.
4. Create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships.
5. Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.

The nature of our top two priorities is growth. It will be important to discuss why we want to grow and what that means for our congregation, especially the changes that growth produces. The nature of these top priorities demonstrates a mixed focus for internal improvements and external outreach. This is a healthy balance. While a healthy congregation maintains an external focus – reaching out to those beyond the walls of the church in mission and ministry - it is quite right that some of our focus is on internal healing, reconciliation and improvements.

In summary, we learned first and foremost that we demonstrate the signs of conflict in our midst and that an intentional process of learning, healing and reconciliation is necessary before we are prepared to call a new Pastor. Some renewal is necessary - through discussion and discernment of our mission and vision. In undertaking this important work together, we will do what is necessary to become a healthier and more vibrant congregation for the future.

Thank you for your participation in this important exercise of self-study and planning for our future. We do look forward to the on-going conversations and work that the CAT results are calling us to do.

¹ **Conservative/Settled Hearth and Home Quadrant** Members of the church like to find familiar ways of doing things and stick with them. On average, the church is theologically more conservative (traditional/orthodox). The combination of a settled approach to change and a more conservative theological perspective gives the church potential strengths in the areas of moral and spiritual clarity, stability in the face of chaotic, societal change, and maintenance of important traditions. On the other hand, the church may find it difficult to make the changes required to achieve its goals without triggering debilitating conflicts.

Summary of Focus Group Themes

In the summer of 2021, the Transition Team conducted 5 Focus Groups. Nearly eighty people participated giving feedback to 5 questions.

Question 1: Share times when the congregation was at its best and how you felt energized.

The congregation is at its best when we are pulling together towards a common goal or mission. Our congregants feel energized by mission trips and when we are invested in our children and youth. We do the high holy days really well such as Christmas Eve and Easter. We have a strong sense of community and enjoy opening the church up to the community through events like the annual church Bazaar (Christmas on the Prairie) and the concerts that we hold. The focus of these events is fellowship and fundraising to support local community organizations. We are also energized by the musical talents of our members and our incredible choir. We also feel at our best when we are able to raise the funds to support the needs of our church.

Question 2: What has contributed most to your spiritual life and growth at this church?

Our congregation feels that adult mission trips, youth mission trips (Caravan), and the numerous adult Christian education activities like adult Sunday School, Bible studies and small groups enable us to develop spiritually and grow in our faith. Biblically grounded sermons that are relatable to the lives of the congregants are also spiritually fulfilling, as are the support that our congregation provides to one another in difficult times. Our congregation shares their support and their faith in Christ through cards, prayers and visits to one another. The music we share as a congregation and the Silent Night Worship, a contemplative service, also lead to spiritual growth. We are also a congregation that shares our stories of faith with one another, which leads us to learn from each other through a shared spirituality. We find spiritual growth when we are asked to step out of our comfort zones into new territories of faith.

Question 3: What two or three things are we known for?

Rock Prairie is known for being a welcoming, warm and accepting congregation. We are friendly and our church is often filled with laughter. We make significant contributions to the local communities for missions through non-profits and are generous with our time, talents and money. We are willing and able to tackle big projects and missions. When our congregation takes on a project, we do it well. We are also known for our excellent monthly newsletter, the Prairie Press, which shares the news of the congregation and the ongoing work we are doing. We are known for sending cards and for our members' involvement in committees. We are also well-known for our music and the good preaching of our pastors.

Question 4: What must never change and what must change?

We want to continue to be a welcoming, laughter-filled, Christ centered church that emphasizes the involvement of all members of our congregation from children to adults. We want to continue to offer opportunities for mission work like Caravan and the Hope Mission trips and the outreach events which bring in members of the local communities, like the Patriotic Concert and Mardi Gras events. We must continue to be accepting of the variety of theological beliefs and the variety of backgrounds of those who make up our congregation. We want to continue to work together to serve our community, grounded in our belief and faith in Jesus Christ. We want our pastor to continue to avoid engaging in politics from the pulpit. We also never want the musical focus of our church to change.

We recognize that we need to be open to new styles and ideas as we look to continue to grow spiritually ourselves and as a church. It is important to us to be reflective of what the community needs, asking ourselves “Who are we not serving and how can we?” We must bring more people into leadership roles and involve more members in the activities of the church, so that the same people are not called on over and over again. We also seek to be welcoming to and a home church for those with special needs and those from different ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

Question 5. What qualities are we looking for in Pastoral Leadership?

We are looking for a pastor who can hold our big tent church together, which includes people from various walks of life and theological viewpoints. We need a pastor who will cultivate collaborative leadership, who acts as a servant leader and has the skills to engage the members of the congregation in leadership roles. We also seek a pastor who shares sermons that are based in scripture and that the congregation can relate to. We seek someone who will honor our heritage yet bring new ideas to the congregation will be successful here. We also believe that it is important for the pastor who serves our church to be involved in the community and to oversee the pastoral/congregational care. We are looking for someone who is a strong spiritual leader who can provide guidance and is able to teach and share. We also would like the pastor to have strong pastoral care skills who will engage in hospital visits and other care visits. It is important for the pastor who we bring in to have good boundaries.

Focus Group Notes Compiled: July 8, 11, 14 and Aug 8, 17, 2021

Below are the unedited actual notes and comments. Groups were conducted with the following outline and guidelines.

Opening Prayer & Scripture: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future,” Jeremiah 29:11

Review before starting:

Set the tone – moving to future while acknowledging the past.

- Assume positive intent
- Be open, transparent, and vulnerable in order to move forward
- Need to own your thoughts, beliefs to encourage discussion

Ground rules-

- Begin/end on time
- No side conversations or crosstalk
- One speaker at a time
- Respect all viewpoints
- Be active – listen, pay attention, discuss

1. Share times when the congregation was at its best and how you felt energized.

- In 2012 we came back to Rock Prairie. We wanted to return, felt very welcomed, and remembered. It was a calm time, felt right. Brandon Crandall singing “Little Drummer Boy”.

- Became active at retirement. Could use my skills and they were appreciated. Felt a sense of belonging. Felt welcomed.
- In the 90's when my boys went on Caravan. They were energized and it spilled over on to me.
- 2004-2008 There was a young Mom's group here, it was meaningful because we were all stay at home moms and we supported each other.
- When pastor leadership was strong, good teaching, solid messages, leadership being more than a job, messages could be applied to life.
- Easter morning: Felt the joy of the resurrection, beauty of decorations, flowers, men's breakfast, music (Because He Lives, Jesus Christ is Risen Today)
- Christmas Eve: See above (We nail these celebrations).
- Mission trips, getting to know and learn about others while doing God's work by helping others.
- Solid youth ministry, Dewey, fun spending more time here
- 1972 was married here
- Friendship groups that have been formed here: Sunset Circle, Adult Sunday School, Committees, Tuesday Crafters
- Excellent interim pastor
- Sticking it out through difficult situations
- Coming together/pulling together
- Choir postludes
- Strong, large youth program (Julie Fowler), youth were in the pews, making announcements, very involved
- Children's involvement
- Mardi Gras concerts
- Easter - singing the Alleluia chorus in front of the church
- Church service at the golf course
- Christmas on the Prairie bazaar
- Coffee and donuts in the garden
- Full choir loft
- Financial pledges during Covid-19
- Patriotic Concert - welcoming, when attended felt they already belonged here prior to joining the church
- Theology that is taught
- Not guarded
- Friendliness
- Emphasis on mission
- Women's retreats
- Groups that get together
- Mission trips
- Funerals - support provided and caring
- Well-rehearsed music
- Gospel music
- Powerful when congregation knows the music
- 1984 when we came: vibrant nursery, growing congregation, friendly people***
- H.O.P.E. mission trips
- Active youth group
- Feels like family
- Church picnics on breezy knoll
- Being welcomed into the choir
- Bazaar, work & study trips, we just "do things better"!
- When the new church was built
- Holiday services
- Witnessing children
- Member get-togethers

- Compassion from members
- Patriotic Concert
- Harry left an impression
- Pastor visits
- Parade from old building into new building
- Sharing prayer requests
- Being involved in events
- Past year and ½ - double whammy of pastor leaving and pandemic, didn't lose but half a step
- Kudos to congregation for helping others in need and the reorganization done to bring things to the congregation
- When new members came in and we all participated in Hands Across the Prairie
- Has been a member for 40 plus years, whenever there's a need, Rock Prairie members rise to meet that need and there is the spirit to promote Jesus Christ
- Harry Johnson - was a people person, drew others in from the community
- Welcome given when he (this member) first came to church
- The choir and the alternative performances like the Patriotic Concert
- When there were 120 children in Sunday School
- Early in Jamie's tenure, working closely with the seminary, lots of young pastors and outreach
- Joined in 1978 and was impressed by the evening circle, there were 30 plus members and everyone was involved and working together, had specific jobs they were doing
- Music - involvement, Patriotic Concert
- Good to have young people - Caravan where they learn to work together and worship together (seconded).
- 35 years ago, raising money for new church
- golf outings-getting to know each other
- shared vision • last few years with Harry Johnson(H.J.)
- lots of young kids involved • lots of young families—felt more alive
- open reception of people • last years of H.J.
- patriotic concerts open to the community
- had a positive experience when they joined in 1994
- lively church during the H.J. era
- young mothers group
- couples socialized in the past • kids brought energy and families
- bazaar—caused us to come together and raise thousands of money for mission
- Caravan (going on Caravan) • progressive dinner-getting to know people

2. What has contributed most to your spiritual life and growth at this church?

- Adult Sunday School**, good preaching, specific studies, Tuesday morning Bible study.
- Caravan*****
- Worship
- Getting involved in work to help others
- H.O.P.E. trips
- Good sermons
- Evening Bible studies with Dee Tally
- Adult Bible Study*
- Music!!
- Friends retreat in Door County
- Women's retreat
- Sermons that relate to real life
- Bringing people together who are doing good things on committees
- Music - what feeds her
- Involvement in committees and causes
- Habitat for Humanity and other local charities

- Friendliness - kindness and generosity
- Reports from mission trips - Dan Collins
- Mission focus
- Caravan - particularly as a chaperone
- Adult Sunday School
- Women's Retreat
- Friends are who they say they are - genuine, sharing their faith journey
- Sharing of prayers
- Learning from each other's spirituality
- Ability to share faith testimony with each other
- People and the fellowship - genuine concern for each other through highs and lows, help carry burdens
- Sermons - something you can take home that keeps popping up
- Daily personal devotions inspired by church
- Sermons that bring you back to what's important and are biblically grounded
- Learned to pray
- Ministering to those who are homebound
- Church family
- Kids' Kirk - make you think and also work for the adults
- Willingness to share themselves
- Devotions together - *Jesus Calling*
- Getting older
- Sunday School – Adult Sunday School
- COVID encouraged us to do daily devotions
- Choir
- Support during illness & injury
- Seeing children in Sunday School and church
- Sunset Circle, Women's Retreat, Friends at the Door
- Being involved, sharing talents
- Helping others and listening to them
- Bible studies
- Music
- Caravan
- Haven't felt growth here...yet (my own fault)
- Sharing my faith
- Prayer leadership and camaraderie
- Receiving cards and prayers from members
- Pony Express
- Illness began new prayer life
- Members supporting you
- Good preaching and sermons
- Influence of good pastors
- Activities that bring us together
- Music
- Choir concerts, special events, weekly special music in the summer
- Adult Bible Study
- Bazaar - goal to provide financial support to the community
- Kids' witness after going on the Caravan trips and the Adult Mission Trips
- Children and youth of the church - they make her study and learn and are constantly teaching her, the first Sunday she attended was one conducted by the kids after Caravan
- Extra programs - Silent Night, simple things that tie it all together
- Sermons that gave you a job to do, impactful throughout the week
- Someone who believes in you and that you have something to contribute

- Sense of community - we should reach out to those who have left
- “If you get what you want, you’ll come to church”
- First Sunday she attended, her favorite hymn from childhood was played, tears from kids’ witnessing
- After Caravan, seeing God through these people
- Examples set by leadership of congregation
- Fellowship - every time he’s done something with the church
- Getting to know people you can count on
- Getting to know people who have a mature faith - learn from each other
- Seeing Christ alive in people
- Adult Sunday School class led by Tom Rios (X 4 people)
- Bible studies—thinking and growing in faith
- chairing a committee
- when I was called to do something bigger than myself
- Daily message Bible studies
- teaching Sunday School for kids—stretching me in Bible stories
- leader on Caravan and growing with the youth in faith
- adult Sunday School class and teaching young kids
- H.J.’s sermons-relatable sermons
- teaching Sunday School • adopt-a-family at Christmas—shopping, wrapping gifts, and delivering
- H.J. and Jamie as pastors
- a membership who embraced me
- a place to belong with my wife
- seeing my kids learn and grow and follow up at home
- what our children learned and how they grew in faith
- H.O.P.E. trips and especially when college kids joined the trips
- H.J.’s sermons that touched hearts (X 4 people)
- trips with PCUSA Disaster Relief trips
- being a deacon and visiting homebound, serving Communion
- as a deacon being with people when dying
- alive spiritual presence

3. What two or three things are we known for?

- Fellowship*, friendliness*, music*
- Good leadership is noticed in the community
- Mission (local and extended)
- H.O.P.E. trips
- Caravan*
- Bazaar (See Christmas on the Prairie).
- Presbyterian Women
- Patriotic Concert*
- Comfortable sized church, easy to get to know one another
- Authentic attitude, really care, don’t just put on an act
- Within the church we incorporate stewardship
- Overall stewardship/mission giving is to be commended!
- Welcoming
- Common ethnicity (would like to change that)
- Used to be known as “The Country Club Church”. Hopefully this has changed.
- “Christmas on the Prairie”, huge outreach, huge amount given to local mission.
- Mardi Gras concerts
- Big Tent Church
- Farm church (Church on the Prairie).
- Youth group

- Accepting, Welcoming
- Caring Church
- Reflection: Are we known as a Spiritual church?
- Contributions to the community
- Donations to various causes
- Friendliness**
- Warmth*
- Christmas on the Prairie bazaar
- Willingness to be open to ideas
- Good food
- Diversity - congregation comes from a wide geographic area and different denominations
- Music programs that are open to the public
- “The big white church on the prairie”
- Ed Stried - Rock Prairie Press - “the best newsletter”*
- Bulletins
- Written communications
- Patriotic Concert*
- Caravan
- Mission - local organizations that benefit*
- Generosity
- Music - always a highlight
- Focus is on Christ
- Silent Night program
- Bazaar
- Patriotic Concert
- Reaching out to new people who come to church
- Fellowship in numerous towns
- If there’s a need and you call on Rock Prairie, we will answer
- Friendliness and laughter
- Music
- Good sermons
- Involvement of the congregation
- Pastor Jamie’s work with Cedar Crest
- Pastoral outreach when her father was ill and end of life
- Mission - through numerous groups, Sunday School, circles, Bazaar, 20% of our budget goes to mission
- Food and the diaper drive
- Pastor at First Presbyterian downtown noted that those with kids would best be served at Rock Prairie
- Contributions to the youth at our church
- The old person’s church
- Variety of ages when she first came to visit
- 5th and 6th graders program FAST
- Caravan - trips made a profound change for the youth who participated
- acceptance of each other and new people
- friendliness of people
- our bazaar (X 3 people)
- good food with others and at bazaar
- caring and welcoming people
- patriotic concert
- our mission—generosity
- music/choir(x2 people)

- candlelight Christmas Eve service
- Silent Night service
- members are connected to community outside of the church
- service in many ways
- our good people
- our location
- Caravan (x 2 people)
- friendly atmosphere
- doing big projects and missions
- when we do things, we do it well
- include the community in activities
- organ music

4. What must never change and what should change?

Never change:

- Never change worship based ministry (we need to step up worship with more outreach to bring people back and reach them)
- We should not change outside in-car service
- We should continue to remain friendly and welcoming
- We should never change doing God's work and worshipping our God
- We need to continue to be Bible based in our worship
- We need to worship in church to be interactive with others
- Don't change our music, continue making it a priority
- Making Stewardship/Mission a priority
- Focus on Christ**
- Mission work
- Structured service
- Focus on youth
- Hospitality - welcoming environment
- Be open to younger generations
- No politics from the pulpit
- Musical accompaniment to the choir
- Continued commitment to older members who play a vital role in the work of the church and its financial health
- Feeling of family, congregation support, love
- Value on mission: local, national, world
- Bazaar, ECHO, charity support
- Keeping an open-door policy
- Welcoming new people fervently
- Sharing the peace
- Hugging
- Excellent pastoral care
- Family atmosphere
- Notion that you can ask for help
- Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Caravan - beginning of young people's path in church, Ian Ruchti noted the faith he found through the Caravans, working together and caring for others
- Outreach
- Programs that bring others in, like the Patriotic Concert, and act as an opportunity to expose people to the church
- interacting with visitors
- loyalty of families—deep roots and history
- emphasis on kids and youth especially Sunday School and Caravan
- welcoming atmosphere for all kids
- welcoming the sounds of kids

- traditional hymns
- acceptance of divergent beliefs (backgrounds?)
- working together
- retaining some familiar hymns
- keep strong foundations
- stay grounded in our faith in Jesus Christ

Change:

- We need to be more web active.
- We need to pay attention to who is looking at churches through the internet
- We need to address diversity
- We need to look forward and not backward
- We need to do more marketing
- We need to add more contemporary music
- We need to do more posting in the local papers
- We need to make changes to attract younger families
- We need to develop a stronger community outreach and not just worship within the 4 walls of our church.
- Grow the choir - find some sopranos
- Younger people - continually ask people to come and join us
- Diversity in age
- Be reflective of what the community needs - "Who are we not serving and how can we?"
- Keeping families - giving them what they need to stay
- How we reach youth
- Live into not always being in control
- Diversity within the service itself - creativity
- Be open accepting to new ideas**
- Have soloist stand away from the piano
- Organ
- Be respectful of the beginning of the service
- Music - could be more upbeat
- Choir practice - not just in the evenings
- Welcoming of those with special needs
- More ethnically diverse
- Continue to grow in technology
- Outreach in ALL forms
- Invitations to groups and more information
- Entertainment increase to attract all groups
- Fewer secrets
- Open communication on personnel decisions
- Sound systems to hear better
- More community outreach, advertising
- Better communication***
- More pastor home visits
- Reorganize the work involved and involve more people in activities
- Misinformation
- This is the 2nd year since we lost our pastor, probably not the last time we'll have to go through a search again, too much time until there's a PNC (seconded)
- Get Presbytery to change - there are churches using headhunters to fill pastoral vacancies
- Could be someone out there who we are missing
- Bring back the Doxology and Gloria Patri and the 23rd Psalm after communion
- Focus on praying for our next pastor - listen for what God is saying to us
- Be willing to make some changes - people who attend worship may change, need to meet their needs and be open to change

- younger families to stick around and attract other young families
- come together after rift and move on
- strong leadership continue both from pulpit and members
- Saturday evening worship service or another time
- going over an hour service (stop doing it)
- move around in the pews instead of always sitting in same places
- after COVID, sit closer together
- light a fire within the congregation
- be involved and grow spiritually
- have a music leader to lead the congregational singing (could just be the choir director turning to the congregation or standing in front of church)
- be open to brand new styles and ideas (X 2 people)

5. What is one of your dreams/wishes for pastoral leadership?

- Select somebody who is devoted to our church, Godly worship, listens to us, teaches and leads.
- Strong skills in counseling and pastoral care
- A pastor full of energy that has a devotion to God that spills over to us, excited about their faith and be like a friend or family member
- Positivity! Move forward and stop looking back!
- Someone who is EXCITED for us and to be here.
- Someone who is charismatic for the Lord
- Superior content in sermons and is capable of applying scripture to our every day lives
- Someone who lives what they preach, doesn't just live it one hour a week on Sunday morning
- Someone who can hold our big tent church together.
- We need a strong leader but we need to step up and create strong leaders within our membership. We can't just rely on the pastor to do the entire job!
- One foot in the 20th century and another in the 21st century
- Inspiring to everyone
- Cooperation
- Has a young family
- Willing to go outside the four walls of the church - be a part of the community
- Supportive of informational programming for the church and community
- PNC will find the right fit
- Approaches being a pastor in a collaborative way
- Loves the Lord with all his or her heart
- Focused on the welfare of the congregation and salvation
- New ideas but an appreciation for history
- With previous experience but youthful ideas
- Has "it"
- Sense of humor
- Preaches to us
- A leader
- Cultivates leaders within the church
- Main purpose is to serve God
- Someone who feels they can do this
- Who wants to be here
- Intends to be here for awhile
- Confidentiality
- Nonjudgmental
- Poll the congregation on members who left and why they were unhappy
- Pastor can bridge the gap of those members who like him/her and those who don't
- Approachable

- Teacher
- Sermons with real life applications
- Pastor can develop strong leaders within the congregation
- Spouse who is amiable
- Strong work ethic
- Evaluator
- Delegator
- Someone who realizes Rock Prairie is a catch
- A strong resume, hopefully pasturing other churches so we can confirm it
- Love for the Lord
- Totally honest (them and us, we all know what we are getting into)
- Dynamic sermons that also have a touch of entertainment
- Sense of humor
- Feels genuinely called to be at Rock Prairie, it's not just a job!!
- Someone who can give as good a sermon as Jamie that includes that connection to your everyday life
- A professional, committed pastor
- Heart for God, steeped in the word of God, who can preach to all age groups
- Someone who can connect to young families
- Pastor who considers our environment and needs
- Someone who can handle the busyness and who will reach out to church members for help
- Someone who brings church members into leadership - tap others who have not served, get others to step up
- Recognizes that we are a suburban congregation, people from many different communities
- Good shepherd: a good shepherd's flock continues to grow and isn't broken up into different groups
- Pastor who leads and who builds up leadership in the church - leadership development
- Friendly, outgoing
- Perfect pastor for our congregation
- Someone who knows their strengths and weaknesses
- Good singing voice
- Not someone who works around others, but instead taps into others
- An evangelist
- Not afraid to grow and learn everyday, especially from the congregation
- Someone who can network and connect with all
- ability to surround themselves with gifts of others
- strong management skills and people skills combined
- good preaching skills and willing to step away from lectionary to preach about current needs
- strong character—have humility and know own strengths and weaknesses
- talks and relates to people from the pulpit
- is out and involved in the community
- strong preaching skills—relates Scripture and faith to people
- people person—someone who wants to be here
- servant leadership
- available before worship
- someone with energy (be careful not to drain them)
- person who has Jesus at the center of their life
- person to help congregation in spiritual growth
- servant leadership
- open to accountability