



**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
CHURCH LEADERSHIP CONNECTION
100 WITHERSPOON STREET
LOUISVILLE, KY 40202-1396
Toll Free 1-888-728-7228 ext. 8550
Fax # (502) 569-5870
www.pcusa.org/clc**

MINISTRY INFORMATION FORM

Ministry ID: 01858
Ministry Name: **First Federated Church of Peoria**
Mailing Address: 3601 N. Sheridan Rd., Peoria, IL 61604
Telephone Number: 309.685.5258 Fax Number: 309.685.5451
Email: info@ffcpeoria.com
Web site: <https://www.ffcpeoria.com/>

Congregation or Organization Size(Select one)

- ☐ Under 100 members
- ☐ 101 - 250 members
- ☐ 251 - 400 members
- ☒ 401 - 650 members
- ☐ 651 - 1000 members
- ☐ 1001 - 1500 members
- ☐ More than 1500 members
- ☐ N/A

Average Worship Attendance: Seasonal variations: Pre-Covid: 175-220 Post-Covid: 125



Church School Attendance: 44 for youth Sunday School

Church School Curriculum: Children's Sunday School Curriculum: *Orange*;
Adults: Selected book studies

☐ Check if certified as eligible for participation in the Seminary Debt Assistance Program

Ethnic Composition Of Congregation (in whole %):

Enter the percentage of each racial ethnic component of your congregation.

_____ American Indian or Alaska Native
_____ Asian
2% Black or African American (African Native, Caribbean)
_____ Hispanic Latino/Latina, Spanish
_____ Middle Eastern
_____ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
98% White
Other _____

Presbytery Great Rivers Synod Lincoln Trails

Community Type (select one)

_____ College _____ Rural _____ Suburban
X Small City _____ Town _____ Urban
_____ Village _____ Recreation _____ Retirement
_____ N/A

Clerk of Session Contact Information:

Name Suzanne Mooney
Address 5407 W Stonebridge Ct
City Peoria State IL Zip Code 61615
Preferred Phone (309) 253-3681 Alternate Phone _____
E-mail sdfm214@comcast.net FAX _____



Select below the position to be filled and the minimal number of years of experience required (*e.g. no experience, first ordained call, up to 2 years, 2-5 years, 5-10 years, or above 10 years*)

<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Position Type</u>	<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Position Type</u>
	Solo Pastor		General Assembly Staff
	Head of Staff (Multi-staff Pastor, who supervised two teaching elders and other staff)		Church Business Administrator
5-10	Head of Staff (supervised one teaching elder and other staff)		Executive Director
	Associate Pastor (Christian Education)		Director of Music (non-ordained)
	Associate Pastor (Youth)		Minister of Music (ordained)
	Associate Pastor (Other)		Mission Co-worker (International)
	Pastor (Church Planter, New Worshipping Community)		Christian Educator (Certified)
	Pastor (Transformation/Redevelopment)		Christian Educator (non-certified)
	Pastor Interim		Administrator
	Pastor (for a designated term)		Funds Developer
	Pastor (Other Temporary i.e., Supply, Student)		Finance Manager
	Pastor, yoked/parish		Media Specialist
	Co-pastor		Communicator
	Executive Pastor		Coordinator
	Evangelist or Mission Pastor		Youth Director (non-ordained)
	Bi-vocational/Tentmaker		Other



<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Position Type</u>	<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Position Type</u>
	Solo Pastor		General Assembly Staff
	Head of Staff (Multi-staff Pastor, who supervised two teaching elders and other staff)		Church Business Administrator
5-10	Head of Staff (supervised one teaching elder and other staff)		Executive Director
	Associate Pastor (Christian Education)		Director of Music (non-ordained)
	Chaplain		
	Pastoral Counselor		
	College/Seminary Faculty		
	Seminary Staff		
	Campus Ministry		
	General Presbyter/Executive Presbyter Presbytery Leader		
	Stated Clerk (Presbytery)		
	Synod Executive		
	Mid-Council Program Staff		



You may also specify the position title (if appropriate): Senior Pastor

Employment Status

☒ Full Time ☐ Part Time ☐ Open to Either
☐ Bi-vocational (able to provide employment through outside partnership)

Is this a yoked congregation? ☒ No ☐ Yes
 (If yes, please complete the Yoked Congregation Detail Form.)

Clergy Couple (Are you open to a clergy couple?) Yes ☐ No ☒

Certification/Training (check below the desired certification or training needed for the position):

Interim/Transitional Ministry Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interim Executive Presbyter Training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Certified Christian Educator	<input type="checkbox"/>	Certified Business Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/>
Certified Conflict Mediator	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clinical Pastoral Education Training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="text"/>			

Language Requirements

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> French
<input type="checkbox"/> Arabic	<input type="checkbox"/> Armenian	<input type="checkbox"/> Creole	<input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese
<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Russian	<input type="checkbox"/> Swahili	<input type="checkbox"/> Burmese
<input type="checkbox"/> Cambodian	<input type="checkbox"/> Indonesian	<input type="checkbox"/> Laotian	<input type="checkbox"/> Thai
<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Taiwanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese	<input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin Chinese
<input type="checkbox"/> Twi	<input type="checkbox"/> Sign Language	<input type="text"/>	Other

Statement of Faith Required ☒ Yes ☐ No

Mission Statement

“Making Disciples through worship, as we praise and glorify God; mission, as we embody God’s love; fellowship, as we love and care for one another; giving, as we express gratitude to God.” As one congregant commented, “We are not a congregation looking for answers as much as we are a group of people willing to wrestle with the questions and doubts that come from confusing life experiences.”



NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What is the congregation's or organization's vision for ministry? Additionally describe how this vision is lived out.

Pastoral staff includes the Lead Pastor as Head of Staff, and the Minister of Pastoral Care. The Director of Worship and Music is a full-time employee. The Organist, Director of Children's Ministries, and the Director of Youth Ministries are part-time employees.

The Executive Board, the governing body, is composed of 12 elected voting members and other ex-officio members. The pastor serves as the moderator. Seven committees conduct the work of the church: Pulpit and Staff, Hospitality, Missions, Christian Education, Buildings and Grounds, Worship, and Finance (that includes stewardship). Each committee meets monthly.

Deacons care for members through personal ministry. Seven committees conduct the work of the church: Pulpit and Staff, Hospitality, Missions, Christian Education, Buildings and Grounds, Worship and Finance. Our church membership understands the importance of offering their time to help with the operation of the church.

Our full day preschool uses our facilities throughout the week. We host a Wednesday night LOGOS program for children. We host vacation bible school and have an active Youth Group. We encourage younger members to get involved in church leadership. Young church members host a youth service one to two times per year.

Members lead prayer discussion groups. Committees organize fundraising events for church missions. We host youth Christmas events, summer family days and events around Holy Week. We have a strong commitment to fellowship as it reflects our desire to share God's grace and be a welcoming church family.

2. How do you feel called to reach out to address the emerging needs of your community or constituency?

We have an intergenerational congregation, and we have groups and activities to serve members of different ages. As we look to the future, some believe there could be an even stronger focus on activities that bring the generations together. Additionally, there is still room for members to become more active in volunteering where there is need within the church. We hope for a pastor who can encourage members to use their gifts in service and who can work well with the various church committees, enabling these groups to participate in the work and vision of the church.



Worship is the foundation of our existence as a congregation. Attendance at our services has declined somewhat since the start of Covid, and there's been talk of working to improve the quality of our online broadcast to draw in more members. There has also been some interest in an additional service time/day to appeal to members who no longer want to rush out the door on Sunday mornings.

Another important aspect of our church identity is our service to the local community and our support of missions. Many members say they find meaning in our involvement in these forms of outreach, and we want to continue, and even possibly expand, our community outreach. The church serves the area with school snack packs, Vacation Bible School, a pre-school, etc. With an increasingly younger demographic and Bradley University in close proximity to the church, we are assessing how best to minister to this population and reach out.

Over the past decade, many prominent churches in our area have built centers adjacent to or near their property, including FFC. Our "Life Together Center" stands out as one of the best. We host our local Community Foundation as a tenant and host many events for the benefit of our community. Located on one of the busiest intersections in Peoria, FFC's Life Together Center is a ministry gem unmatched in our community.

3. How will this position help you to reach your vision and mission goals?

To realize our congregation's vision, this person should effectively balance empathy and strength. The Pastor instructs while still listening, leads while serving, galvanizes without alienating, and advances the church's mission with coherent communication and deep respect and compassion for diverse opinions and life experiences. As the church leader, the Pastor will be at ease communicating and enacting our mission in a variety of settings and through a variety of means. The lead pastor and head of staff role at First Federated requires a combination of spiritual awareness, intellectual acuity, a hopeful mindset, and compassionate leadership to help us honor the past and shape the future of a mission to serve one another, our community and the goals of a global mission.

4. Provide a description of the characteristics needed by the person who is open to being called to this congregation and/or organization.

We are searching for an individual who will come alongside our congregation and lead us into a more loving relationship with Christ, our community and each other. A successful candidate should be able to carefully observe the strengths, challenges and opportunities that exist in our church. This person will need to respect that individuals' interpretations and perspectives might very well differ from theirs or those held by others at First Federated Church. But ours is a church of tolerance and understanding. Additionally, this person should also be a successful collaborator, with the ability to work well with groups. Since this is a lead pastor position, the candidate should exhibit a strong ability to communicate/preach in innovative and effective ways.



5. For what specific tasks, assignments, and programs areas will this person have responsibility?

Preparation & leadership of Sunday worship

1. Spiritual guidance & pastoral care

- A. Support spiritual welfare of FFC congregation
- B. Express deep, evident faith
- C. Responsible for worship experience
- D. Coordinate with music staff, ministry program, liturgist
- E. Administer sacraments, officiate at baptisms, weddings, funerals
- F. Provide pastoral care

2. Leadership & development

- A. Collaborative head of staff
- B. Provide staff support, spiritual guidance to committees
- C. Promote healthy morale
- D. Engage in professional development
- E. Live church's mission

3. Community Engagement & Partnerships

- A. Foster community relationships
- B. Support community in social justice initiatives

4. Resource development

- A. Create welcoming community to support growth & church's mission
- B. Help identify & nurture spiritual gifts of members
- C. Support long-term financial goals

OPTIONAL LINKS

Provide below any links to online information that may help call seekers understand your congregation or organization. (e.g. *organization or community websites, online newsletters, demographic information*) Please note the CLC system does not warehouse links. (Limit characters to 500)

<https://www.ffcpeoria.com/>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/FFCPeoriaIL>
<https://www.facebook.com/FirstFederatedChurchPeoria/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/ffcpeoria>



LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

THEOLOGICAL/SPIRITUAL INTERPRETER			
X	Compassionate – having the ability to suffer with others; being motivated by others pain and is called into action as advocate; is motivated by caring for others while concurrently keeping the organizational goals clearly in focus.		Hopeful – maintains stability in the moment and hope for the future; provides direction, guidance, and faith when describing basic needs; and helps followers to see a way through chaos and complexity.
X	Preaching and Worship Leadership: Is a consistently effective preacher and worship leader; is able to inspire from the pulpit; communicates a clear and consistent message through sermons that are carefully prepared and artfully delivered; projects the identity and character of the congregation through worship leadership presence.	X	Spiritual Maturity: Shows strong personal depth and spiritual grounding; demonstrates integrity by walking the talk and by responding with faithfulness of purpose; is seen by others as trustworthy and authentic; nurtures a rich spiritual life; seeks the wisdom and guidance of appropriate mentors; is able to articulate a clear and consistent theology.
	Lifelong Learner – individuals who use every experience in life as a potential tool for growth; one who pursues continuing education; and those who build on strengths and seek assistance to improve weaknesses.	X	Teacher – creates learning environments where students are active participants as individuals and as members of collaborative groups; designs lesson plans that teach concepts, facts, and theology; effectively uses multiple learning tools to reach a wide variety of learners; revises instructional strategies based upon ministry/organization context.

COMMUNICATION			
X	Communicator - Advances the abilities of individuals and the organizations through active listening supported with meaningful oral and written presentation of information.		Bilingual – having the ability to use two languages, especially with equal or nearly equal fluency; able to use multiple languages in communication.
	Public Communicator - Demonstrates a comfortable ease when speaking in a variety of settings (both small and large groups); is effective at addressing a variety of topics; can get messages across with the desired effect.		Media Communicator: Has experience developing materials for a variety of written or multimedia forms of communications (print, Internet-based, social media, etc.)
	Technologically Savvy - the ability to navigate successfully the world of technology using software, blogging, multi-media, and websites as tools for ministry.		

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

X	Advisor – an individual others turn to for counsel and guidance; provides coaching; expertise for congregations or other organizations.	Change Agent – having the ability to lead the change process successfully; anchoring the change in the congregation's/organization's vision and mission.
	Contextualization – the ability to assess accurately the context, environment, history, relationships and uniqueness of a congregation or organization.	Culturally Proficient – having solid understanding of the norms, values and common behaviors of various peoples, including direct experience working in multiple cultural and cross-cultural settings.
	Externally Aware - identifies and keeps informed of the polity of the church and/or the organization; maintains current with laws, regulations, policies, procedures, trends, and developments both internally and in the larger society.	Entrepreneurial - leaders that are creative in using resources; identifies opportunities to develop; is willing to take risks, initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.
	Risk Taker – persons with the ability to take appropriate risk to accomplish needed goals; one who thinks outside the box and who is not afraid of challenging the status-quo.	Task Manager - Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization; holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities; can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget; and monitors and evaluates plans, focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.
	Willingness to Engage Conflict: Steps up to conflicts, seeing them as opportunities; reads situations quickly; good at focused listening; can identify common ground and elicit cooperation from others in crafting mutual solutions.	Decision Making: Makes effective decisions, balancing analysis, wisdom, experience, and judgment; is aware of the long term implications of choices made; is generally regarded as offering solutions and suggestions that are correct and effective.
	Organizational Agility: Is astute about how congregations and/or organizations work; knows how to get things done through formal and informal channels; understands the importance of supporting good policy, practice, and procedure; appreciates the power in the culture of a congregation; is politically savvy.	X Strategy and Vision: Sees ahead clearly, keeping focused on the larger picture; can anticipate future consequences and trends accurately; is future oriented; casts a compelling and inspired vision for a preferred future; sees possibility; crafts breakthrough strategies.
	Financial Manager – deliver results by maximizing organizational effectiveness and sustainability through the best use of available financial resources; allocates and manages finances transparently; implements strategies to achieve operational efficiencies and value for money; puts in place rigorous and comprehensive financial accountability systems.	Funds Developer – maintains the ability to solicit donations used to fund the budget of the organization; effectively expresses the needs for funds to potential donors; responsible for adding new potential donors to the organization's contact list; prepares statement of planned activities and enlists support for mission initiatives.
X	Collaboration: Has a natural orientation toward getting people to work together; shares wins and successes; fosters open dialogue; lets people finish and be responsible for their work; creates strong feelings of belonging among group members; is a good judge of talent and can accurately assess the strengths and limitations of others.	

INTERPERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

	Interpersonal Engagement - Displays a consistent ability to build solid relationships of trust and respect inside and outside of the organization; engage people, organizations, and partners in developing goals, executing plans, and delivering results; use negotiation skills and adaptability to encourage recognition of joint concerns, collaboration, and to influence the success of outcomes.		Bridge Builder – possessing a certain responsibility for the unity of the congregation and or organization; works to connect people of different cultures, worldviews, and theological positions.
X	Motivator - Creates and sustains an organizational culture which permits others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well; and influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.		Personal Resilience: Learns from adversity and failure; picks up on the need to change personal, interpersonal, and leadership behaviors; deals well with ambiguity; copes effectively with change; can decide and act without having the total picture; comfortably handles risk and uncertainty; seeks feedback; expresses personal regret when appropriate
	Initiative: Demonstrates ambition is highly motivated; is action oriented and full of energy for things seen as challenging; seizes opportunity; pushes self and others to achieve desired results.	X	Flexibility - Adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, unexpected obstacles, or ambiguity; remains open to new ideas and approaches; and works concurrently on related and conflicting priorities without losing focus or attention.
	Self Differentiation: Demonstrates strong and appropriate personal boundaries in relationships; has a healthy appreciation of self, without being egotistical; is emotionally mature; can maintain a less- anxious presence in the midst of turmoil; is not overly dependent upon outside affirmation; works to build a strong personal support system.		

***COMPENSATION AND HOUSING:** *A range is needed for matching purposes. The maximum salary is not published anywhere.* Effective salary is cash salary plus housing allowance or manse value and other compensation considered “effective salary” by the Board of Pensions of the PC (U.S.A.)

See Effective Salary Definition at [Board of Pensions](#).

Minimum **Effective** Salary \$ ____ 65,000 ____ Maximum **Effective** Salary ____ 85,000 ____

Housing Type ____ Manse
 X ____ Housing Allowance
 ____ Open To Either (Manse or Housing Allowance)
 ____ Not Applicable (*For Non-pastoral Positions Only*)

***EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore, no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than stated in this Constitution. (F-1.0403)

Each Pastor Nominating committee and Search committee is expected to undertake its search for a Teaching Elder in a manner consistent with the good news that in the church “...*as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

Has the Pastor Nominating Committee and Search Committee affirmed its intention to follow the Form of Government in this regard?

____ X ____ Yes

____ No

REFERENCES (Limit 3)

Below, please list three persons who know your congregation. You might list your Presbytery leadership, a neighboring pastor, or other persons whom you believe can give a clear and accurate reference for your congregation.

Name Mark Roberts

Address The Life Together Center

Phone Numbers (309) 674-8739

Relation CEO Community Foundation of Central Illinois

E-mail mark@communityfoundation.org

Name Donna Kosner
Address 6310 N. University St. Peoria, IL 61612
Phone Numbers (309) 839-2754
Relation Paws Giving Independence
E-mail dkosner@givingindependence.org

Name Libby Braband
Address 1525 Greenwood Wilmette, IL 60091
Phone Numbers (773) 343-3294
Relation Vice President of Parsons Corporation. Former member
E-mail ebraband@yahoo.com

***Pastor Nominating Committee/Search Committee Chairperson/Mid-council Search Committee Chairperson:**

Name Elizabeth Weber/ Celia Johnson, co-chairs
Address 2303 W. Pintura Ct.
City Peoria State IL Zip Code 61614
Preferred Phone (309) 251-1565
Alternate Phone (309) 693-0206
E-mail Address for PNC Communications (required): eweber@fsmail.bradley.edu

ENDORSEMENTS

Pastor Nominating Committee/
Search Committee  Date 5-19-22
Signature

Clerk of Session _____ Date _____
Signature

Presbytery _____ Date _____
Signature

**First Federated Church
Peoria, IL**

MISSION STUDY

MISSION STUDY: First Federated Church - Peoria IL

Upon reflecting on the question, "Who is God calling FFC to become?" we wanted to hear the voices of our members. We chose to have 10 one-hour focus group sessions with prepared questions to help us identify where we are now at FFC, and a Congregational Survey to help guide us as we prepare for the future. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed in preparation for both the UCC and PCUSA profiles. Copies of the focus group questions and the complete survey are attached as appendices A & B.

Focus Group outcomes:

Participants (N=48) expressed many items of importance to grow and sustain our church in our efforts to become what God calls us to be. Their thoughts and ideas fell into the seven categories below.

Committee Work:

People felt that committee work was engaging and motivating. They named specific committees they liked to work on. They like the variety of committees that appeal to a variety of individuals. There were some committees identified as being in the past that they thought would be good to bring back and enliven the church. Some committees were associated with particular events that allowed more people to engage in a variety of activities; specifically addressed were missions such as Habitat for Humanity, family picnics, intergenerational activities, and community meals.

Children and Youth:

Participants felt the children/youth programs were critical. Our website is evidence of the active part that the children/youth have in the church. The intergenerational activities (VBS and LOGOS) were mentioned and are also evident in the many pictures on the website. The children/youth are inspiring to the congregation; they set an example for many adults when they listen intensely during the children's sermon. Our church families come from many different locations in the area, and it is challenging to find time for youth to meet with the many different activities and schedules that they are involved with. Therefore, we need to get creative and explore many avenues to involve our youth. We also currently have no college ministry, though there is a mid-sized university just ten minutes from us, and this might be an opportunity for growth.

Welcoming Atmosphere:

Focus group participants feel that having a welcoming congregation is very important in growing the church. Although the social hour following worship has diminished with COVID, it is an important time for people to make friends and connect with people. We need to reach out to the community to bring in more diversity; more people add to the spirituality and energy of the church.

Music:

We currently have our regular chancel choir and a chancel bell choir that performs every Sunday. Our church has been blessed with some very talented people who occasionally share by playing instruments or singing solos. People specifically stated that they like traditional music the majority of the time. One group suggested we consider a children's choir. Additionally, they liked when we brought in Bradley musicians, so perhaps we can do this again when people are more comfortable getting back to normal.

Missions and Outreach:

People expressed spiritual fulfillment and pride for the congregation with the participation in the mission programs. They specifically identified Habitat for Humanity, School Snack Pack program, the Christmas Catalog, Rummage Sale, WanaWaMola in Mombasa Kenya, both youth and adult mission trips, and PAWS. Some felt we are doing average with our missions and need to focus on this more. People would like more information about the different missions and would like to hear representatives from our local missions come speak about what is accomplished through the mission. Perhaps we need to better identify needs and be more responsive locally. Our congregation is very generous; the Christmas catalog and rummage sale brought in record amounts this past season.

Tradition:

Again, the music was mentioned, but people also focused on our efforts to be traditional yet progressive. We have some diversity, but need to consider how we can better reach out to others. We do have adult opportunities with book clubs, Bible studies, Women's Club, Old Buddies Breakfast, and several other groups, but some would like Adult Sunday school brought back.

Worship:

Focus group participants mentioned the beauty of the sanctuary and how it promotes a peaceful feeling as a place to think/meditate. There was spiritual fulfillment when a lot of people came together. This has been missed with COVID limitations, but we can strive for this as we move forward. Another suggestion was to have speakers. Participants like the "church on-line" especially when they are unable to attend.

Congregational Survey outcomes:

The Congregational Survey focused on two aspects, personal pastoral qualities and pastoral qualities that support the life of the congregation. There were 113 respondents to the survey; following is a summary of the results.

Personal Pastoral Qualities:

The top three qualities in the first category of personal pastoral qualities rated as very important and important were: Ability to work with groups (96.5%); Relates message through real-world examples (95.6%); and Ability to communicate faith & beliefs (89.4%). (See Table below)

Pastoral Qualities to Support the Life of the Church:

In the second category, the top three ratings of very important and important were: Collaboration being the top leadership style (88.5%); Works to grow vibrant youth programs (85.9%); and supports missions locally (85.8%).

Pastoral Attributes and Preaching Style:

The top five most important pastoral attributes chosen were; good interpersonal communication, personable, engaging speaker, sincere spiritual leader, and inspirational. The three most effective preaching styles were ranked as: Personal, relational, engaging; narrative stories to illustrate points; and use of textual scripture to provide meaning.

Displayed on the table below are qualities identified as very important or important. The top three qualities in each category are highlighted. The qualities that are somewhat important are also recorded with the total percent of the top three ratings in the third column. Additional results in Appendices C & D.

Congregational Survey Results: Table of Top Ratings:

Personal Pastoral Quality	% Very important or important	% Somewhat important	Total % of top three ratings
1. Ability to work with groups	96.5%	3.5%	100%
2. Relates message through real-world examples	95.6%	Minimal	95.6+%
3. Ability to communicate faith & beliefs	89.4%	8.8%	97.2%
Pastoral quality supporting the life of the church	% Very important or important	% Somewhat important	Total % of top two ratings
Question 24 Top leadership style - Collaboration	88.5%	11.5%	100%
Question 19 Works to grow vibrant youth programs	85.9%	12.4%	98.3%
Question 14 Supports missions locally	85.8%	12.5%	98.3%
Question 25 Five most important attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good interpersonal communication • personable • engaging speaker • sincere spiritual leader • inspirational 	85% 83.2% 75.2% 71.7% 61.1%	NA	NA
Question 26 Three most effective preaching styles to communicate God's word: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal, relational engaging • narrative - use of stories • textual - meaningful scripture 	87.6% 81.4% 34.5%	NA	NA

In summary, FFC has a lot of positive elements to continue to maintain. For the church to continue to meet the needs of the congregational mission and goals, we will need to be faithful in our efforts as we seek God's guidance.

Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

Discussion questions:

1. Think back on your entire experience at FFC, and name a time when you felt the most engaged, alive and motivated.
2. When you consider all of your experiences at FFC, what has contributed the most to your spiritual life?
3. Tell about a time when you were most proud of your association with this congregation.
4. What do you think is the single, most important, live-giving characteristic at FFC? When we are at our best, what are we doing?
5. What motivates you to come to worship at FFC?
6. Complete this sentence with one of the two choices for each item (everyone should vote for one - no "half votes" are allowed!) "Our church is . . ."
 - a. **Rigid or Flexible?**
 - b. **Status Quo or Mission-oriented?**
 - c. **Fearful or Courageous?**
 - d. **Thriving or Getting by?**
7. What do you think FFC is doing really well?
8. How well do you feel FFC meets the needs of the current congregation?
9. Thinking of the Peoria community and beyond (globally), how well do you think FFC ministers to the needs locally and beyond?

Additional questions if time:

10. Don't be humble! The Apostle Paul speaks of spiritual gifts -- what gifts do you share with the congregation (including things like personality, perspectives, skills, character, etc.)?
11. Now consider any gifts you have that aren't shared with the church. Are there gifts -- such as talents you enjoy or skills you are good at -- that don't get shared with the church because opportunities don't exist?
12. If we define a relational group as a group of people who gather at times other than on Sunday morning, for the purpose of prayer, study or fellowship on a weekly basis...what relational groups does FFC have?
13. What does FFC do to prepare teachers, elders, and other leaders in the church?
14. What are the ministry opportunities begging for attention in FFC's neighborhood/Peoria?
15. If FFC were to close, what would be the one thing people in the community would miss most?

Appendix B: Congregational Survey

Appendix B: Congregational Survey

These qualities are important to me in a senior pastor: Rank as ***Very important (5), Important (4), Somewhat Important (3), Not very important (2), and Not important (1)***

1. _____ Ability to communicate faith and beliefs through inspirational speaking skills based on scripture.
2. _____ Counseling members who are dealing with personal problems.
3. _____ Participation in community activities.
4. _____ Importance of senior pastor visiting the sick and grieving in addition to the Pastoral Care Minister.
5. _____ Visitation with members both current and potential.
6. _____ Works well with individual groups within the church, committees, elders, deacons, etc.
7. _____ Facilitates support of missions, locally and worldwide.
8. _____ Emphasis on teaching the congregation.
9. _____ Encourages and works with youth programs.
10. _____ Promotes a variety of times and settings for worship.
11. _____ In composing sermons, the senior pastor uses real-world examples that relate the message to the lives of the congregation.
12. _____ In composing sermons, the senior pastor is faithful to the liturgical calendar, such as Advent, Pentecost, etc.
13. _____ Works regularly in development of stewardship growth.

These qualities are important in the life of the congregation: (Same ranking system)

14. _____ Supports the missions of the church locally.
15. _____ Supports the missions of the church globally.
16. _____ Provides opportunities for lay leadership and participation.

- 17. _____ Provides more worship and study opportunities throughout the week.
- 18. _____ Maintains traditional music, including choir, hymns, bells, guest musicians, etc.
- 19. _____ Works to grow more vibrant youth programs and activities.
- 20. _____ Provides a variety of volunteer opportunities.
- 21. _____ Improves online services to attract new members.
- 22. _____ Accommodates the needs of all church members.
- 23. _____ Offers small group engagement opportunities for multiple age groups and interests.

24. Select one:

The leadership style of the senior pastor that I find most desirable is _____.

- a. Senior pastor makes the final decision.
- b. Senior pastor collaborates with committees and members.
- c. Senior pastor delegates to committees/ congregation, leaving them with the final decision.

25. Please read the following attributes of a potential pastor and rank your top 5:

- a. Personable _____
- b. Sincere spiritual leader _____
- c. Effective biblical communicator _____
- d. Engaging speaker _____
- e. Good interpersonal communicator/listener _____
- f. Missions-minded _____
- g. Adaptable and flexible _____
- h. Inspirational _____

26. Which of the following elements of preaching style most effectively communicate God's Word to you?

Check the 3 that appeal to you in a sermon:

- () Logical, detailed, point by point.
- () Personal. relational, engaging.
- () Textual (the Scripture text provides the meaning.
- () Narrative (the use of stories to illustrate points.
- () Sermon series (spending multiple weeks on a topic.
- () Bible book (spending multiple weeks on a book of the Bible.
- () Challenging, appealing for action or change (revival).

27. Please share with us any other thoughts you may have that are not addressed in this survey:

We appreciate your taking the time to complete this survey.

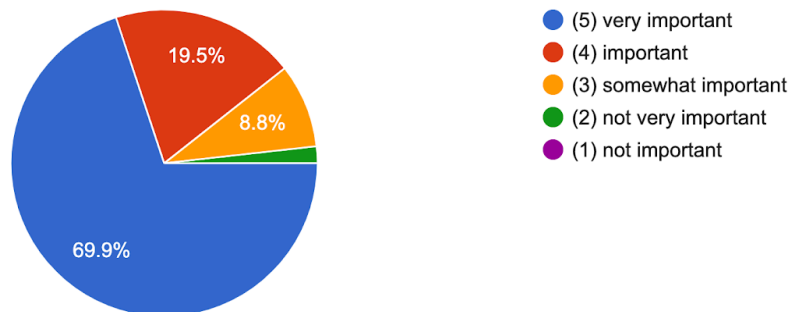
Please return all surveys to the church by _____

Appendix C: Survey Results

How important to you are the following qualities in a senior minister?

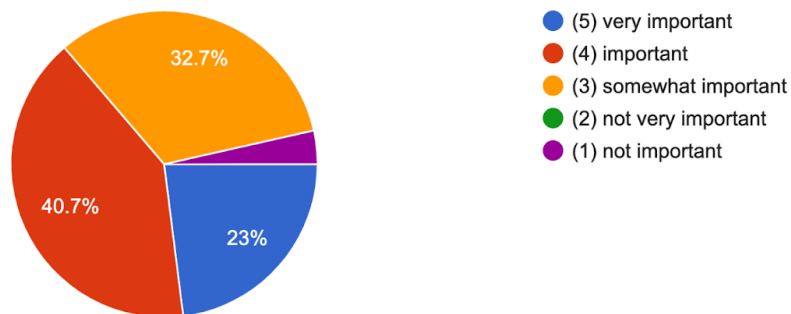
1) Ability to communicate faith and beliefs through inspirational speaking skills based on scripture.

113 responses



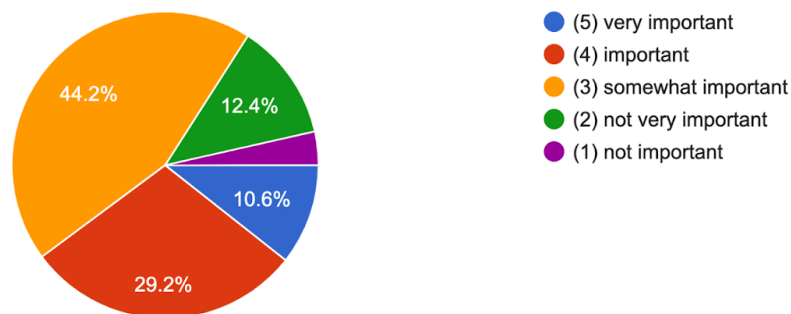
2) Ability to counsel members who are dealing with personal problems

113 responses



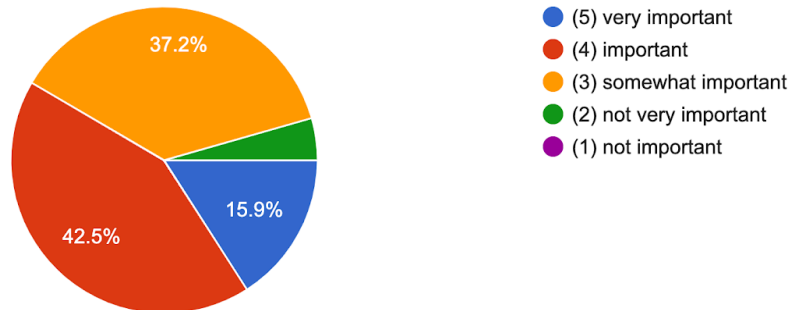
3) Participation in community activities

113 responses



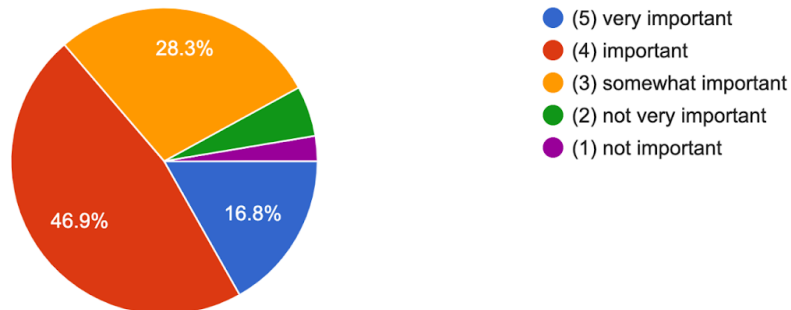
4) Visitation of the sick and grieving (in addition to visits by the Pastoral Care Minister)

113 responses



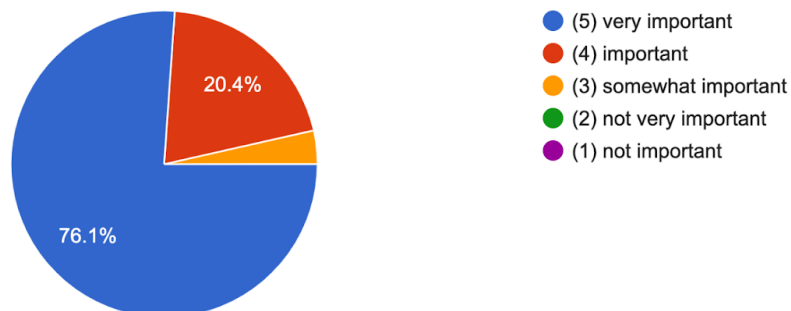
5) Visitation with members (current and potential)

113 responses



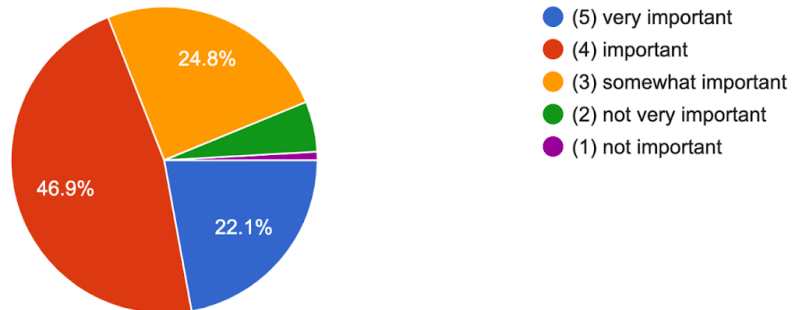
6) Ability to work well with individual groups within the church (committees, elders, deacons, etc.)

113 responses



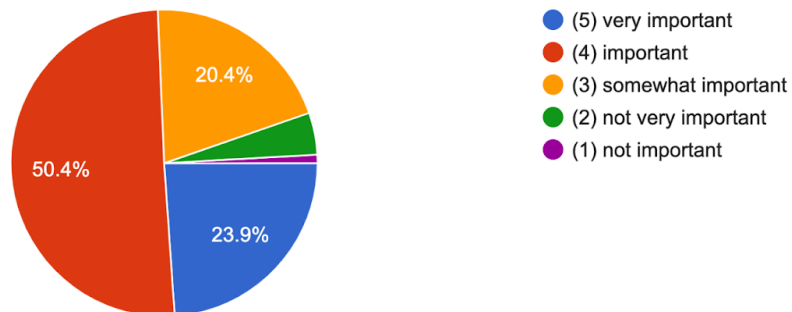
7) Ability to facilitate support of missions (locally and worldwide)

113 responses



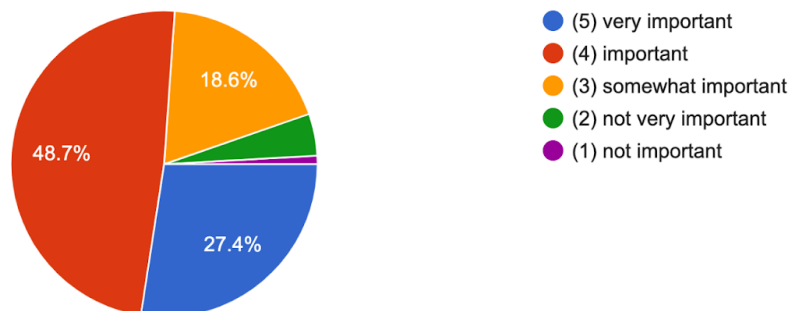
8) Emphasizes teaching the congregation

113 responses



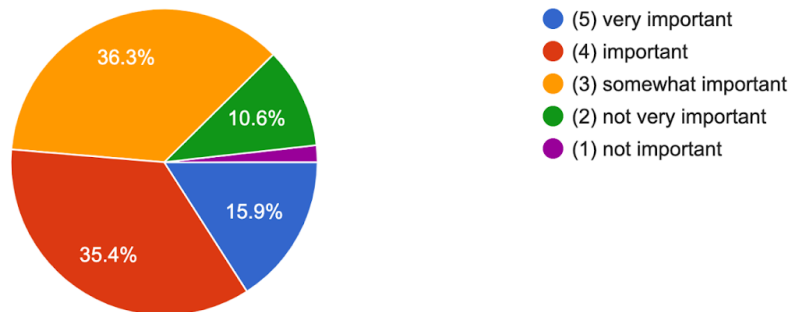
9) Encourages and works with youth programs

113 responses



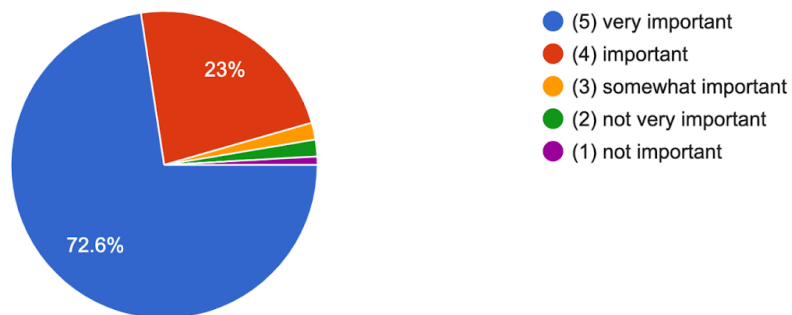
10) Promotes a variety of opportunities for worship (settings, times)

113 responses



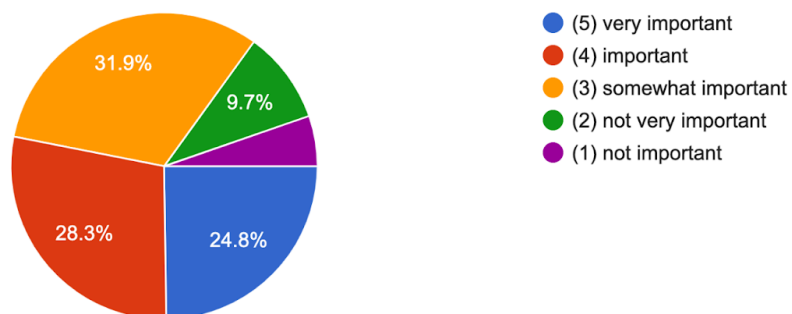
11) Has the ability, when composing sermons, to use real-world examples that relate the message to the lives of the congregation

113 responses



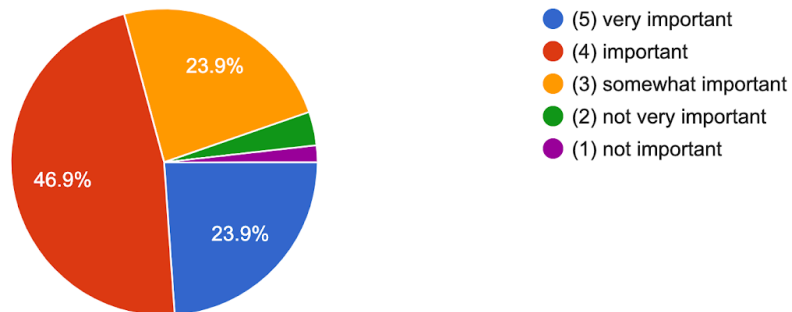
12) When composing sermons, is faithful to the liturgical calendar (Advent, Pentecost, etc.)

113 responses



13) Works regularly in the development of stewardship growth

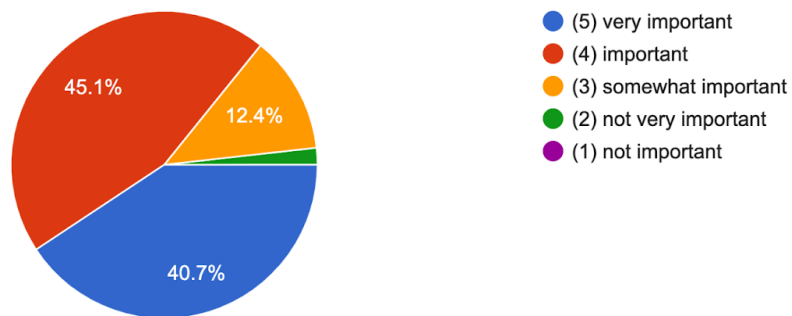
113 responses



How important are the following pastoral qualities in the life of the congregation?

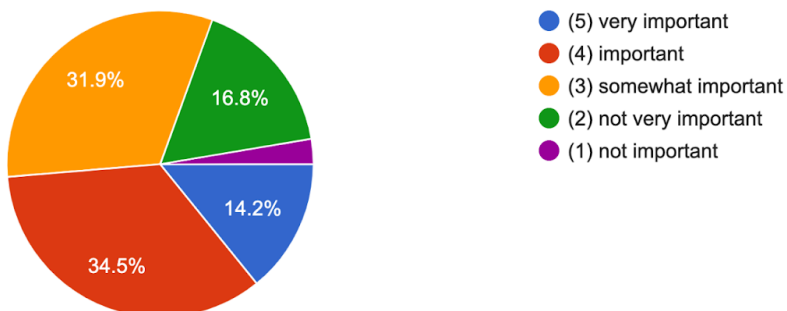
14) Supports the missions of the church locally

113 responses



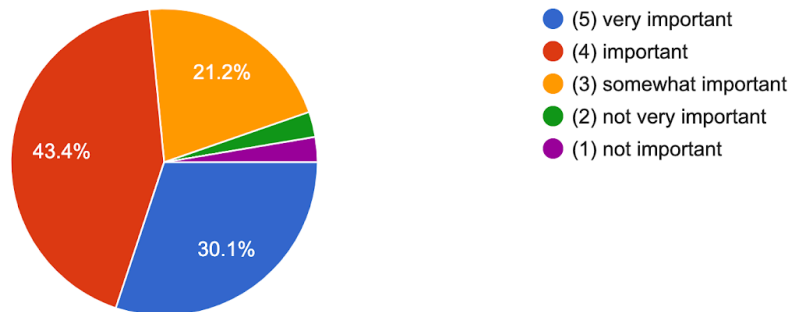
15) Supports the missions of the church globally

113 responses



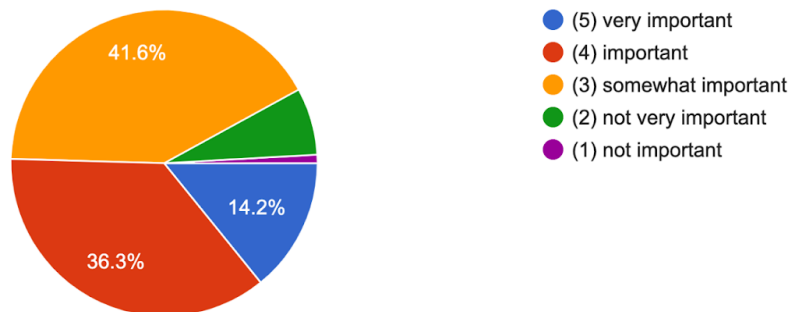
16) Provides opportunities for lay leadership and participation

113 responses



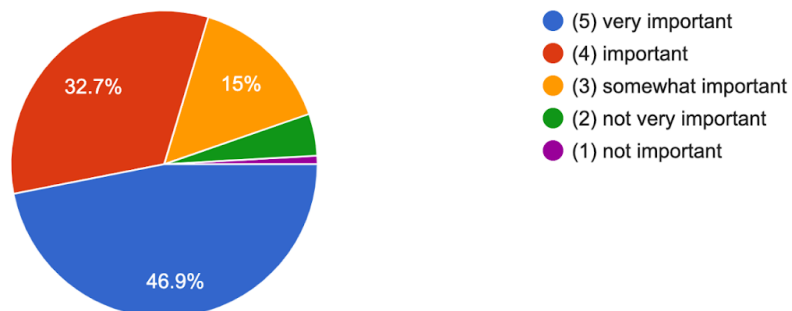
17) Provides additional worship and study opportunities throughout the week

113 responses



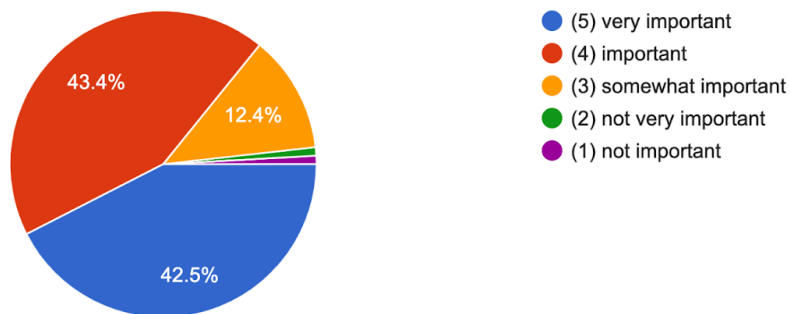
18) Maintains traditional music, including choir, hymns, bells, guest musicians, etc.

113 responses



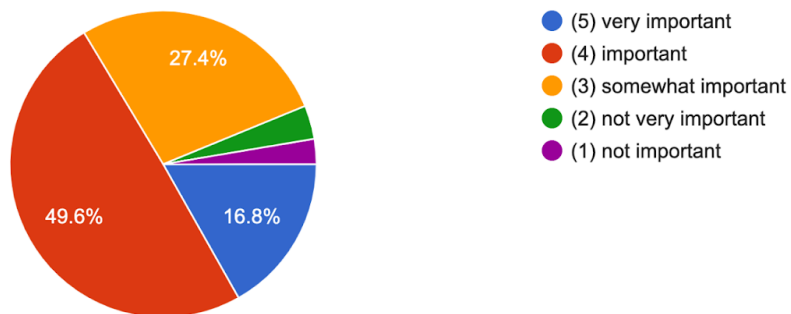
19) Works to grow more vibrant youth programs and activities

113 responses



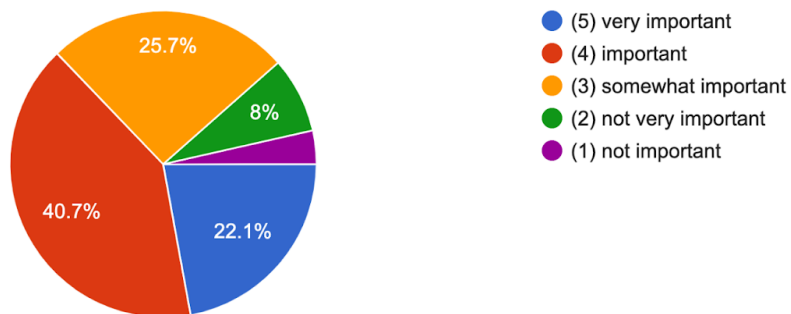
20) Provides a variety of volunteer opportunities

113 responses



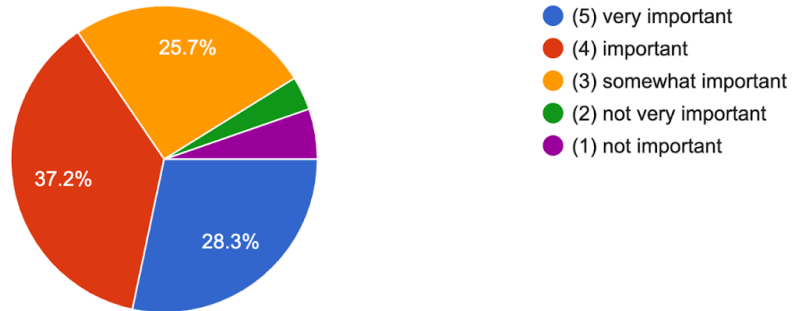
21) Improves quality of online services to attract new members

113 responses



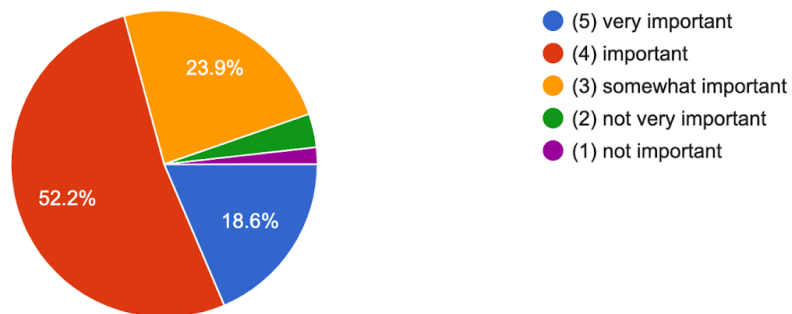
22) Accommodates the needs of all church members

113 responses



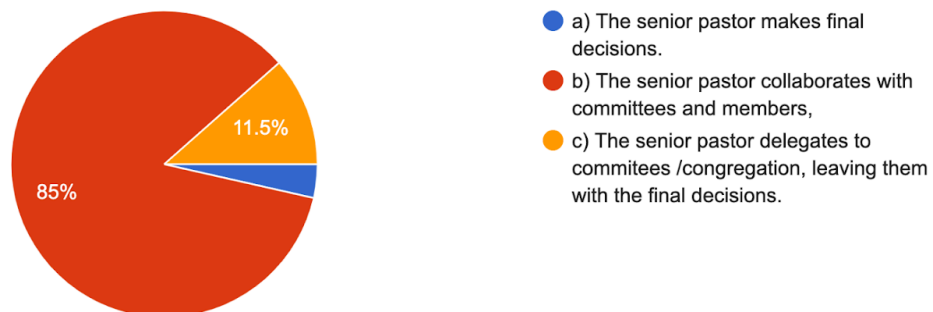
23) Offers small group engagement opportunities for multiple age groups and interests.

113 responses



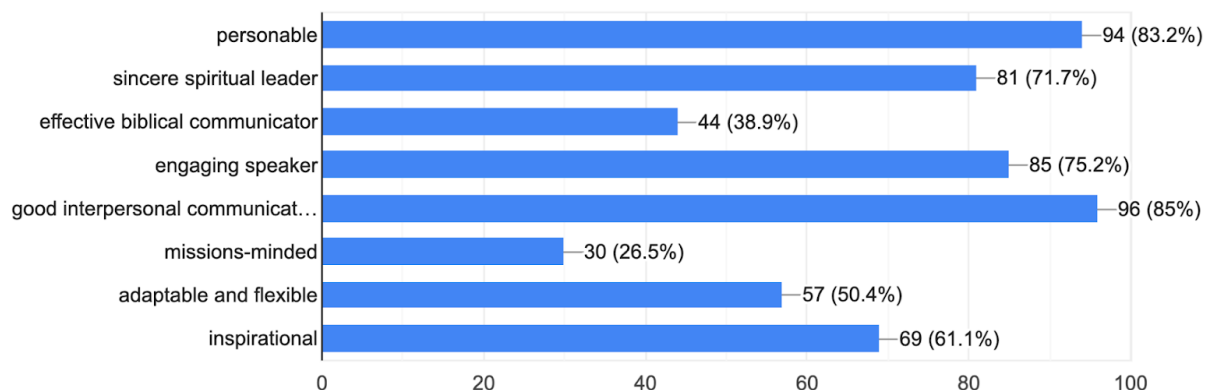
24) The leadership style of the senior pastor that I find most desirable is: (select only 1)

113 responses



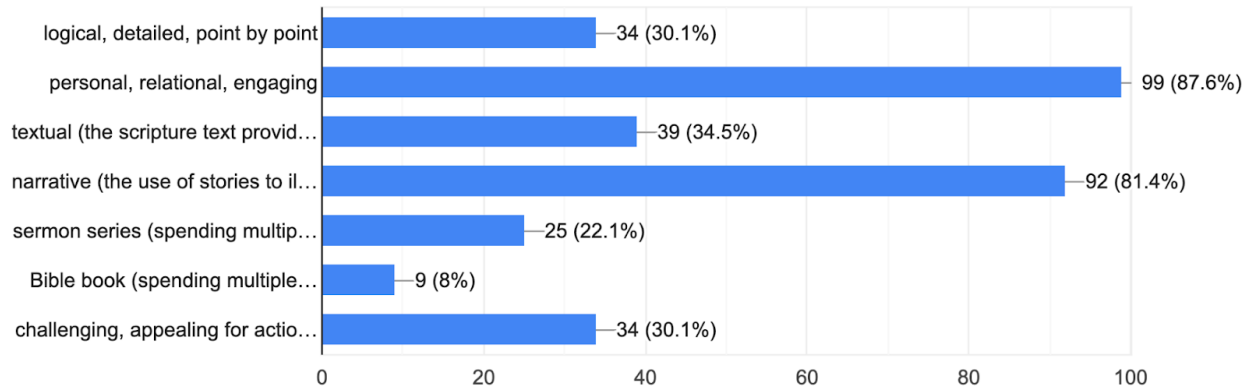
25) Select the 5 attributes of a potential pastor that are most important to you: (Select only 5)

113 responses



26) Which of the following elements of preaching style most effectively communicate God's word to you? (Select only 3)

113 responses



27) Please share with us any other thoughts you may have that are not addressed in this survey:

- Input from anonymous mailed paper survey.
- Input from anonymous online paper survey.
- IMPORTANT BUT NOT ADDRESSED ANYWHERE ABOVE: The prospective minister absolutely must be prepared to have a complete understanding of the church's bylaws and be 100% committed to working within them. Should the bylaws be inadequate, the minister must work through the

congregation to modify the bylaws. FFC is an institutional church. The minister must be responsive to the board and submit themselves to the board's oversight.

- Pastor should have a servant's heart
- A leader who is willing to work with others and lead in a healthy environment
- Many of your questions really apply to the youth minister and or the pastoral care minister not so much the senior minister. We thank each committee member for your time and commitment to FFC's future.

- It's important for a Senior minister to handle the things only a Senior minister can handle and allow others to take care of other things. He can be consulted when questions come up but should be able to delegate some of the work to trusted coworkers and committees.
- The membership profile of our church has changed and membership has reduced and continues to decline. A minister with a track record of membership growth should also be considered.
- We always seem to end up with a Presbyterian minister. While that hasn't been bad, shouldn't we get a Congregational minister for a change. After all we are a federated church. With a Presbyterian minister, I'm never sure if he/she understands that he/she works for the Board not the other way around.
- recognize the wide range of beliefs among this congregation
- I would like to see a minister who does NOT follow the lectionary, but is more liberal thinking, more accepting of the good in other religions, brings in current events, and introduces new ideas in Bible research.
- A) Can help us develop a vision on how to best utilize the entire physical campus. B) Can help us create a plan for financial sustainability. C) Can help us leverage pre-school success to bring more young families into FFC.
- An important quality of the pastor will be the ability to manage and coordinate the staff and key committees.
- Pep up the music
- Having a minister that engages with the congregation is important. He/She needs to be personable, approachable and a team player.
- The new minister needs to push for the evolution of the church. Missions, energy and civic leadership, social justice, and open fiscal communication will be important facets to attract Gen X, Millennial, and younger members, while being respectful to the older generations. This person should be a good speaker, and intelligent, but constantly learning, but does not need to 'show off' their learned-ness.

- I found question 24 very difficult. There needs to be a point "person" for decision making which is the executive board with input / recommendations from the senior pastor. In providing that input, the pastor would collaboratively work with committee's in the congregation. But for day, to day operational items, I would think the senior pastor has to make the decisions. So I could justify bullet one or two but I do not believe either fully describes my preferred approach.
- I was ill and couldn't attend a focus group. What I wanted to say there is that I hope that the committee is using the consultant reports that were generated a couple of years ago by the consultants that we hired for finance and church health. They provide a good picture of the church. I believe that we have been successful in implementing many of the suggestions but we have not addressed the issue of factions in the church and the often unhealthy way that disagreements are handled. I do not think that we are going to be able to keep a pastor if these issues are not dealt with. I even heard that there was an effort to not listen to negative feedback in the focus groups. This has been a large and often not talked about issue in the church but the consultant did a good job of bringing light to the issue. A new pastor must have exceptional skills in conflict management and in organizational assessment.

- The senior pastor also needs to be good at managing the church staff and leading them in the day to day operation of the church.
- In choosing leadership style, I think it's important that a minister is part of active lay leadership groups, i.e. executive board, Christian ed board, etc. A very important quality for clergy is always a personal relationship with God that is reflected in how he/she lives. I believe that FFC congregation will always value Biblical scholarship interpreted in practical applications. We are not a congregation looking for answers as much as we are a group of people willing to wrestle with the questions and doubts that come from confusing life experiences. Prayers for all of you on the search committee.
- I believe we are looking for a new pastor that is traditional but will have to be progressive in the religious sense to fit in well with FFC.
- My ideal senior pastor is one who is aware and tuned in to the things happening in our church community without necessarily needing to have direct input or final say over every single detail. The pastor should be one who is part of the community, not ruling over the community. I enjoy sermons that give me pause to reflect on how the message and lesson can be interpreted and adapted into my daily life and activities. I do not enjoy overly "preachy" sermons that dictate good/bad, right/wrong, etc. The world is a grey place, and it is our task to make it as bright and beautiful as we can, while still respecting, honoring, and lifting up those who may not think, feel, look, or believe the same as us.
- Input from anonymous mailed paper survey. New pastor needs to be flexible - current events may come into play requiring action from pulpit. Promoting growth in the 20-35 age group. Needs flexible

music. Need to look at alternative services (contemporary) for this group. Readily available and rapid response to all concerns and inquiries.

- Input from anonymous online paper survey. We need a younger pastor who will be at FFC for a long time to develop a consistency and help build programs and dedicated membership. A friendly and personable pastor with an engaging and welcoming personality who I feel comfortable being with and talking with. A pastor who will continue a traditional worship service, but bring new and meaningful aspects to it to engage all ages of our members. It's very important to me to continue to keep our younger families and add new ones, but I want to keep our traditional service instead of a more contemporary one (big screens, rock bands, and drums!). Thanks for your time and effort with this most important project. God's blessings to you.
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. I'd like the person that we choose to be our next minister to have a warm, genuine, authentic personality! I want this person to be able to relate to the young and old. I want this person to be empathetic and to have a good sense of humor! They need to have a good tone to their voice, NOT a monotone type that could put you to sleep! They need to be ENTHUSIASTIC and INSPIRATIONAL in their sermons!!!
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. The choices of attributes in a senior pastor were all important to this person and they couldn't distinguish between them. "Good luck folks. I will be happy to support your decision. May God be with you. I will pray for you. Actually, I have a very high regard for Steve. Hope that he stays acquainted with our church."
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. The senior pastor must be honest, trustworthy and kind with a strong focus on the spiritual and religious needs of the members of the congregation and with the ability to deliver attention getting and thought provoking sermons that incorporate and address current social issues.
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. I think our senior pastor should also be active in our community (i.e. be an active member in a service club such as rotary).
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. Relate to everyday life and not just a time that we didn't live in. One dinner I attended years ago, I felt physically uncomfortable and had to leave early. My husband got a ride home - at my insistence. The minister called that night to check on me. Meaningful and wasn't forgotten. Care for the congregation.
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. I really like being a part of the church - I feel very close to God. I do say thanks to God for this life. God is very important in many ways. Thanks be to God.
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. Minister is spiritual leader, not youth director, fundraiser, music director or CEO. Board and Committees, lay leadership make decisions for the church, not the minister. Minister tends to his flock, teaches classes, visits members of the congregation, develops and encourages community. Wishing the pastoral search committee the best. We have confidence in the committee!

- Input from anonymous online paper survey. Have to remember the pastor is ONE person and cannot be everything to everybody.
- Input from anonymous online paper survey. It is important the pastor have a personality that attracts prospective members. It is important that the pastor feels pastoral ministry is essential (because the congregation is aging).
- unanimous paper survey: A pastor with background in theology and prior experience with a congregation is going to be important for a church this size.
- A good sense of humor; balanced approach; strong consultative skills; developed leadership abilities

- Unanimous paper survey: We need a strong, personable leader; someone that is a good shepherd of our flock; a traditional, old fashioned leader/minister.

- I believe charity first begins at home.
- Unanimous paper survey - I would prefer all of the above qualities in a minister younger than 49 years of age. We need to reinvigorate our congregation with new members and young families.

- unanimous paper survey: Many of the items were marked lower because there are members in the church that can handle such programs without the Senior Pastor having to be involved deeply in every aspect of the church.

- We are only in Peoria 6 months of the year.

- I would also like to see us work towards becoming an open and affirming church.

- unanimous paper survey: Please remember that a minister is only one person and be sure he's not on overload. I am a traditionalist and enjoy traditional services.
- unanimous paper survey - Share theological thoughts of recent theologians in interpretation of Biblical text in small groups if not sermons.
- unanimous paper survey: We have been very happy with the past two ministers and hope the committee will pick someone similar to them. Sorry this is late. We are in Florida and our mail is slow coming to us.
- unanimous paper survey: I want a pastor who is apolitical. That's the goal of any pastor, but not often practiced. That's what Jesus practiced above all other things. I feel like the push for diversity and progressive leaves many like me behind, I am a traditionalist, but still understand that Jesus' love for me and others is the foundation of the church. We don't need special (? unreadable) to make certain feel accepted. Jesus already accepts everyone and I think our church does too.

- Making the best use of our incredible physical assets ... and moving toward financial stability.

- Question #22 - accommodates the needs of all church members - With a diverse congregation (Specifically ages), there will always be members who feel left out by leadership decisions. I would emphasize that a senior pastor needs to have well-developed conflict resolution skills.

Appendix D:

Percentage Table of Survey Results

Table of Percentages of Survey Results:

Personal Pastoral Quality	% Very important or important	% Somewhat important	Total % of top two ratings
1, Ability to communicate faith & beliefs	89.2% 92.2% 89.4%	8.9%	98.1%
2. Counseling members	63.4% 62.8% 63.7%	33%	96.4%
3. Community participation	39.3% 47.1% 39.8%	44.6%	83.9%
4. Visitation of sick & grieving	58.1% 64.7% 58.4%	37%	95.1%
5. Visiting members	63.4% 74.5% 63.7%	28.6%	92%
6. Ability to work with groups	96.4% 100% 96.5%	3.6%	100%
7. Ability to facilitate support of missions	68.7% 78.4% 69%	25%	93.7%
8. Emphasizes teaching the congregation	74.1% 82.4% 74.3%	20.5%	94.6%
9. Encourage s & works with youth programs	75.9% 80.4% 76.1%	18.8%	94.7%
10. Promotes a variety of opportunities for worship	51.8% 70.6% 53.1%	35.7%	87.5%
11. Relates message through real-world examples	95.5% 96.9% 95.6%	minimal	95.5%

Pastoral quality supporting the life of the church	% Very important or important	% Somewhat important	Total % of top two ratings
12. Sermons faithful to the liturgical calendar	53.6% 58.8% 53.1%	31.3%	84.9%
13. Regular development of stewardship growth	70.5% 80.4% 70.8%	24.1%	94.6%
14. Supports missions locally	85.7% 90.2% 85.8%	12.5%	98.2%
15. Supports missions globally	48.2% 49% 48.7%	32.1%	80.3%
16. Provides opportunities for lay leadership & participation	73.3% 82.3% 73.5%	21.4%	94.7%
17. Provides additional worship & study opportunities	50% 66.7% 50.5%	42%	92%
18. Maintains traditional music	79.4% 76.5% 79.6%	15.2%	94.6%
19. Works to grow vibrant youth programs	85.8% 94.1% 85.9	12.5%	98.3%
20. Provides a variety of volunteer opportunities	66.1% 76.4% 66.4%	27.7%	93.8%
21. Improves quality of online services to attract members	62.5% 68.6% 62.8%	25.9%	88.4%
22. Accommodates the needs of all church members	65.8% 72.5% 65.5%	25.9%	91.6%
23. Offers small group experiences for diverse ages & interests	70.6% 80.4%	24.1%	94.7%

	70.8%		
24. Top leadership style - Collaboration	84.8+% 86.3% 88.5%	11.6%	96.4+%
25. Five most important attributes: - good interpersonal communication - personable - engaging speaker - sincere spiritual leader - inspirational	84.8% (92.2%) 85% 83% (84.3%) 83.2% 75.9% (76.5%) 75.2% 71.4% (70.6%) 71.7% 60.7% (54.9%) 61.1%	NA	NA
26. Three most effective preaching style to communicate God's word: - personal, relational, engaging - narrative - use of stories - textual - meaningful scripture text	87.5% (92.2%) 87.6% 82.1% (88.2%) 81.4% 34.8% 34.5%	NA	NA

Appendix E: Reference Letters

Paws Giving Independence



"saving a life to change a life"

I have been asked to write this letter about my experience at First Federated Church. I am on the board of directors and am one of the founders of Paws Giving Independence. We are an all volunteer non profit that was started in 2008. We train service dogs for individuals with a variety of abilities and place them free of charge to our recipients. We train mainly for wheelchair/mobility and medical response as well as facility dogs for areas schools and centers.

We have worked with First Federated for over ten years. They were our first community partner at a time when we were just starting out and because of First Federated we are still here almost 14 years later, still placing service dogs. While we are an all volunteer organization we have to cover the costs of the 25 dogs in training at a time. The number of dogs we can train at a time is based on our income. We were chosen to be in their Christmas catalog and the congregation has done so much to embrace us. We have been included in the catalog every year and received generous donations. We have presented at their services and to their pre schoolers helping people become aware of what we do.

Whenever I go to First Federated I feel the warmth and compassion of the people there. While their donation is a huge help to us every year it is the welcoming feeling of going there that means so much to us. We feel they really care about what we do and care about the people we help. Their members always take the time to talk to us and they talk to our recipients. It is like visiting family and we always look forward to going to see them.

We applied for a grant this year and it involved national online voting. We are a small organization so we didn't think we stood much of a chance. I called the church and asked if they could ask their congregation to vote for us. Not only did they promote it on their social media, but one of the congregants with marketing background called and he and his sons showed us how to promote it and create flyers and a QR code that made it easier for people to vote. He was so kind and followed up with me regularly through the weeks of voting. We got the grant and it was thanks to their caring enough to help us.

If you are looking for a congregation that cares about their own congregation, but also reaches out to others both locally and internationally this is the perfect choice for you. There is a lot of need in the Peoria area and I am always impressed with the different ways they reach out to those who need their help. I recently found out about all they do to help a local school that has one of our facility dogs that works with profoundly disabled children. They do these things not for recognition, but to help our community. It is beautiful to watch a congregation that does so much to reach those in need in our area in so many different ways. They are a very special group of people that live their faith.

Donna Kosner
Paws Giving Independence



3625 North Sheridan Road
Peoria, IL 61604

March 1, 2022

First Federated Church
3601 N. Sheridan Rd.
Peoria, IL 61604

Dear First Federated Church Pastoral Search Committee,

It is my pleasure to offer a few brief thoughts in regard to First Federated Church's (FFC) ministry. As background, the Community Foundation of Central Illinois (CFCI) moved our offices to FFC's Life Together Center (LTC) in August 2015. The fact that we, a non-faith-based organization, did so is one of the strengths of FFC's ministry, in my opinion. The church's commitment to supporting the broader local community, not just their immediate church family, is remarkable. Prior to our move, church representatives worked closely with us to determine our needs, led the effort to design the office space, and even paid for 50% of the buildout. They graciously established a more than fair payback plan for our portion of the buildout, in addition to a very reasonable monthly rent structure. It made our move to the LTC a complete "no-brainer". The church demonstrated strong support for our mission as a community-focused nonprofit organization, and clearly went well above and beyond to make us feel welcome. We remain thankful for this initial positive experience to this day.

In the nearly seven years that CFCI has officed in the LTC, we have been privileged to observe many aspects of FFC's mission in action. In addition to a clear, strong commitment to the Peoria-area community, we have enjoyed seeing their commitment to fundraising activities like the annual rummage sale; the care and attention that goes into support children through their daycare, vacation bible school, and other youth-focused activities and programs; and the fellowship demonstrated by church members and other volunteers as they work on these programs, among many others.

In summary, CFCI is thankful for our relationship with FFC, and are pleased to work alongside the church in serving the community. If I can provide any additional information, I will be happy to do so.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "MARK".

Mark Roberts
President and CEO

309-674-8730
CommunityFoundationci.org

March 3, 2022

First Federated Church
3601 N Sheridan Rd,
Peoria, IL 61604

Re: Senior Pastor Search

I am delighted to serve as a non-member reference for First Federated Church in Peoria. While I have not attended the church for many decades, my religious roots and the foundation of my faith was established within it. I was always proud to be a member of FFC (despite often hearing the name sounded like a bank) because -- in a period where so much of religion fostered division -- MY church's very roots were in uniting and fellowship. The church itself had been formed after a fire destroyed First Congregational Church and neighboring Second Presbyterian Church invited congregants to join them for worship; eventually the two congregations merged the financial resources and built First Federated Church, as it exists today -- half Presbyterian and half UCC. This was so unique and represented to me everything that religion should be.

To understand how important FFC is to me you must understand that my parents and my husband and I were married there, and sadly in 2018 my mother's funeral was held there. Her ashes are in the columbarium on the property -- in a spot she chose when the facility was first installed decades ago. She selected a spot right along the walkway as she claimed she wanted a prime spot that would "allow her to eavesdrop on all conversations and stay up on the gossip of the church" in perpetuity. The following should paint a picture of why -- all of these years later -- FFC remains so very important to me.

One of the other things that always distinguished FFC was its excellent youth programs. From its nursery to its senior high youth group, FFC attracted families. When I was in high school many teenagers who didn't even go to FFC would attend our youth group activities. Some of those same students are now active adult members of the church.

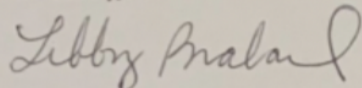
Another thing that was always notable about FFC was that it was a COVETED location for a wedding. From its long center aisle to its beautiful altar to its wonderful organ, people have always wanted to get married in the sanctuary. While that may seem insignificant, many of those people, who might have been attracted to the church for purely aesthetic reasons have also gone on to become longtime members of the church. FFC has leveraged this by continuing to enhance spaces for fellowship with both the creation of the atrium and the purchase of the adjacent insurance property, now known as the church's "Life Together Center," which hosts church and community events and is home to the Community Foundation of Central Illinois and the Central Illinois Youth Symphony.

FFC has always had an active mission program: I was a participant on the first Yucatan work trip in the early 1990's, and it was a deeply impactful experience. However, I have been glad to see more of its mission focus turning to locally based organizations. Peoria is a wonderful town. However, it does face many urban challenges. As a church with financial resources from a relatively affluent congregation, I feel strongly that the most joyful noise FFC could make in Peoria would be to further enhance its local ministry engagement beyond its current involvement, e.g. Rebuild Peoria Together, Habitat for Humanity and Reading Buddies.

Finally, as an outsider, I would love to see the church consider options to enhance diversity in its congregation and to add caring for creation/environmental stewardship to the church goals. While I don't ever expect FFC to become a super progressive church, I do believe as Christians we cannot hide our collective heads in the sand at our role in environmental stewardship and our obligation to our future generations.

I look forward to discussing FFC with you in greater detail. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 773-343-3294 or ebraband@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Libby Braband". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Libby Braband