

MISSION SELF STUDY

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BOWLING GREEN, OHIO
2007**

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The First Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green, Ohio is progressing on a new journey of faith, mission and ministry as it seeks God's will in partnering with a new and dynamic pastor to travel this journey with us.

The process to get to where we are today has been a rather long and sometimes frustrating journey. After a few months of praying and seeking God's timing, the right group of eight persons were joined and approved by session. Our interim pastor joined us in August 2006 and we began the study process in February 2007.

This Mission Study Team of eight members began meeting, on average, twice a month to determine what it was they were actually being called to do and how they were going to do it. We always attempted to spend some time in a centering prayer to help us focus on God, God's will for us, and on the process. We also began each gathering sharing any God-sightings/insights that anyone had since the previous meeting.

Besides reviewing many articles, Biblical models and researchers' ideas about what the 21st Century/Missional Church looks like, the Team began listing and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the church. Following that, the Team scheduled three fellowship circle discussions (two on Sundays for an hour after worship and one on a Wednesday evening) for members to come and respond to five primary questions:

- What are the strengths of the church?
- What are the weaknesses of the church?
- What's one thing you would change, so that our church can survive and grow?
- What conditions exist in the community that we should address? What specific actions could First Presbyterian take to better the spiritual and social lives of the citizens of BG?
- What gifts, qualities, and experiences should we seek in our new pastor?

The team noted that only about 30% of the active members participated.

From this the team felt that there were few surprises, but noted the following as being more important to those who did participate:

- That there was a real need to connect better with guests/visitors
- That there was a need for some form of alternative/contemporary service
- That the church needs to find more opportunities to reach more of the Bowling Green State University students
- That there was concern for maintaining the building and better utilizing it
- That the music program was a real plus for many, but a negative to others

- Information About This Document Continued -

- and that the new pastor should be someone with experience in revitalization.
(Note: Further discussion on page 22 - 24)

The team discussed the work of other Presbyterian and non-Presbyterian churches that were in the process of revitalization and/or growth. There was a lot of discussion about visiting other churches to see what they were doing and to experience their different types of services. Two churches were actually visited – First Presbyterian Church in Napoleon, Ohio and First Presbyterian Church in Maumee, Ohio. One member of the team spent about 45 minutes on the phone with the senior pastor at Bidwell Presbyterian Church in Chico, California – an urban church in a college town that had grown from 400 to over 1200 members in the past 10 years. One of the things they focused on was building on the old and not on eliminating programs already in place.

One major issue which was dealt with directly occurred during the time of the mission study. The issue was whether our church continued to substantially support the full inclusion into the church of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and non-chaste heterosexual persons (including ordination), and that was resolved in May. It was felt that the position of the church on this issue was important to settle before calling a pastor. Those who participated in the survey supported full inclusion by a large majority.

The team attempted to report its work in several different ways to the membership – in bulletins, newsletter and minutes for mission. The session had determined at its retreat at the beginning of 2007 that a Pastor Nominating Committee should be elected no later than September, and in July set August 26 to elect that Committee.

In the meantime, the Mission Study Team reviewed Mission Study Reports from three other churches, determined the sections that needed to be completed and divided the work to be completed, in rough draft at least, no later than August 26.

Members of the Mission Study Team:

Dick Martin	Gail Nader
Marcy St. John	Al Kepke
Susan Dunn	Janet Sorrells
Leigh Kendrick	Theresa Dunn

Members of the Pastor Nominating Committee:

Eric Myers	Gail Nader
John Quinn	Adriane Weisert
Marcy St. John	David Hyslop
Lora Graves	

MISSION STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Current Mission Statement

We, the First Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green, are a community of believers who worship and serve God in a changing world. We are committed to:

- Celebrate the peace and fulfillment which comes from our acceptance of God's love for us in Jesus Christ;
- Spread the good news of God who has come to us in Jesus Christ and who reaches out to all people through the Holy Spirit;
- Nurture our community of believers of all ages and the larger community;
- Give our time, talent, and resources in gratitude for what we have received;
- Involve everyone in the rewarding mission of this church.

II. Rationale for Change

The Mission Study Team recommends to the session additions to the current Mission Statement. The team sees the need for a more accessible and user friendly Mission Statement for our congregation as well as the community at large.

III. Recommendation for Change

A. Short version for use on bulletins, posters, etc.

Serve the Lord

Seek the Truth

Share the Word

Shine the Light

-Mission Statement And Recommendations Continued-

B. Longer version

**Serve the Lord
Through
Worship
Service
Devotion
Support**

**Seek the Truth
Through
Prayer
Scripture
Reflection
Fellowship**

**Share the Word
Through
Teaching
Engagement
Mission
Ministry**

**Shine the Light
Through
Living the Word
Welcoming All
Acting in Love
Upholding Justice**

HISTORY OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – BOWLING GREEN, OH

First Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green can trace its origin to the very early settling of the Black Swamp of NW Ohio. The church was founded by 13 people on the 13th of October, 1855. Of the 13 founding members, 10 had been members of the Church of the Plain, now known as Plain Congregational Church located just west of BG. Plain Congregational Church was founded in 1835 by missionaries from a Presbyterian Indian Mission. That mission was begun in 1823 along the Maumee River near Tontogany Creek several miles NW of Bowling Green.

The new congregation of First Presbyterian initially met in a building near the NW corner of S. Main and Washington Streets which they shared with the local Methodist congregation. Apparently the building was also used for other purposes. According to Jane Baldwin, wife of our first minister, the building "...only by courtesy could be called a church. [The] odor of the atmosphere indicated the character of the gathering the previous evening." Within eight months after being organized, the trustees recorded a donated building site on a tree covered sandy knoll on a dirt lane now known as Church Street...a site that is still the home of First Presbyterian Church of BG.

The first church, a plain, dignified white structure with a low steeple, was built several years later. It was dedicated on February 8, 1860. This building served the congregation well until a new brick church building was built in 1888-89. The new church was located on the same site as the old wooden church which was moved immediately to the south of the new building. Tragically, at noon on January 2, 1919, the brick church was destroyed by fire which apparently started in the furnace area. In spite of the valiant efforts by the local fire department, the roof over the main sanctuary caved in 45 minutes after the fire started. The loss far exceeded the \$13,000 worth of insurance. Church trustees met the night after the fire, and the congregation decided on January 14 to build a new church.

The present building was built on the site of the destroyed church (126 S. Church St.). It was dedicated the week of December 5-10, 1922. While the building was being constructed, the congregation met in the assembly room of the Wood County Court House. When the church was completed, \$57,360 had been raised by the congregation and another \$50,000 was borrowed. The stock market crash and resulting depression slowed payment of the mortgage; however, in 1943 the mortgage was burned. The beautiful stained glass windows were installed in the mid 1930's by a member of the congregation in memory of her son who had been killed in an automobile accident. In

-History Of First Presbyterian Church – Bowling Green, OH Continued-

1960, an educational wing was added to provide for church offices and additional classroom space for the Christian Education program.

First Presbyterian Church has had many dedicated pastors over its long history in spite of a rather tumultuous pastoral beginning. Rev. Perry C. Baldwin, our first pastor, also served Plain Church. Unfortunately, he was asked to leave Plain Church because he, “entertained discouraging views of the future of our church and society...”. He left Plain Church but continued at First Presbyterian until after the Civil War. He was followed by several other stated supply ministers who served the BG church as well as others in the area.

The first installed minister of First Presbyterian was Reverend William McElwee who arrived in 1870 from Philadelphia. He, too, ran into difficulty when he was accused of seducing a 17-year-old orphan girl who lived with the family of a church elder. The local newspaper called him the “Reverend Scoundrel” and he quickly left town. Eighteen years then elapsed until First Presbyterian Church installed another pastor...being served by stated supply pastors during that time.

Time healed the wounds, however, and during the 20th century, First Presbyterian Church was served by a number of dedicated ministers. One long term pastorate was that of Rev. Dr. Greer Imbrie, who served the First Presbyterian congregation for 31 years from January 1954 until December 1984. During that time, communicant membership grew from 611 to 925 and a new educational building was added.

Following Dr. Imbrie’s retirement, First Presbyterian Church was served by several interim ministers until March 1986 when Rev. Dr. Thomas Green was called and installed as pastor. Dr. Green’s personal style, preaching, and approach to his work were significantly different than what the congregation had been used to with Dr. Imbrie. Enough concern was raised that it led to calls for Dr. Green’s resignation in September 1989.

Again, a time for healing was needed and this was accomplished under the leadership of Rev. Craig Seitz who served the church from 1989 to 1992. In March 1992, the congregation called Rev. David C. Young to serve, which he very capably did until his retirement in April 2006.

In spite of the efforts of many, the last 25 years have been challenging for the congregation of First Presbyterian. For various reasons, communicant membership has declined from 925 in 1980 to 342 in 2007. Much of this was undoubtedly due to the

-History Of First Presbyterian Church – Bowling Green, OH Continued-

shift away from mainline churches as well as a declining birthrate, an aging congregation, the controversy of Dr. Green's pastorate, the transient nature of the city's population, and very likely many other reasons.

However, even though the membership has declined, the mission and outreach of the church remains strong and vibrant. Many active volunteers and paid staff continue to be the backbone of our mission and outreach. Further details on the current congregation, mission and outreach programs of the church can be found throughout this report.

In addition, members of First Presbyterian Church have been very active in civic and governmental affairs. For example, eight of the last ten mayors of BG (including the current one) have been active members of First Presbyterian Church. In addition, over half of the outstanding citizen awards presented annually by the local Chamber of Commerce have gone to members of First Presbyterian.

First Presbyterian Church has had a long and vibrant history in the Bowling Green community. We are proud of our 152 year history of serving the spiritual needs of the community from our downtown location as the only church ever to be located on "Church Street" in Bowling Green.

INTRODUCTION TO BOWLING GREEN, OHIO

Bowling Green is a friendly town in northwest Ohio, located about 25 miles south of Toledo and 85 miles south of Detroit, Michigan. The county seat of Wood County, Bowling Green is situated on Interstate 75, which provides access to points north and south. The city is the proud home of Bowling Green State University, with approximately 20,000 students annually.

First settled in the 1830s, Bowling Green was incorporated as a town in 1855 and officially achieved city status in 1901. Dependent on farming, fur trading and lumbering during its early years, the city was affected by the discovery of oil in nearby North Baltimore in 1886, which brought people and revenue to the area. Many of Bowling Green's lavish homes built with revenue from oil money are still standing today.

Activities

Year-round events keep the community and the university campus busy with activity. In January and February, BGSU hosts several gallery exhibitions and cultural events. In March, the Woodland Mall hosts the Power of Yesteryear antique farm equipment exhibit. Main Street stores become art galleries during the annual ArtWalk! in April. Hundreds of classic cars line Main Street in July for the annual Classics on Main car show. Wood County Fairgrounds hosts the annual National Tractor Pull, which brings tens of thousands of attendees to town each August and awards over \$150,000 in purse money. September marks the Black Swamp Arts Festival, an annual art fair in Bowling Green. Started in 1993, the festival now hosts over 150 artists and four musical stages with over 60,000 people attending.

Bowling Green is also chock full of historic, cultural, and recreational sites for visitors to sample, such as the Wood County Historical Museum, Snook's Dream Cars Auto Museum, a community theater, symphony, and university performing and visual arts. Sports activity in Bowling Green focuses on Bowling Green State University. Hosting teams in 22 different sports, the Falcons participate in NCAA Division I (Division I-A for football) and in the Mid-American Conference.

-Introduction To Bowling Green, Ohio Continued-

Nearby Cities and Towns

Location	Pop.	Median Family Income (2000 Census)
<u>Bowling Green</u>	29,636	\$51,804
<u>Maumee</u>	15,237	\$60,776
<u>North Baltimore</u>	3,361	\$45,962
<u>Perrysburg</u>	16,945	\$75,651
<u>Rossford</u>	6,406	\$57,442
<u>Waterville</u>	4,828	\$71,027

Profile of Bowling Green, OH

Bowling Green Population (2000)

Category	Count	Percent
Total Population	29,636	100%
Male	13,865	46.8%
Female	15,771	53.2%
Under 18	3,880	13.1%
18+	25,756	86.9%
65+	2,266	7.6%
Median Age	22.4	
Average Family Size	2.84	
White	27,219	91.8%
African-American	837	2.8%
Asian	543	1.8%
American Indian & Alaskan	62	0.2%
Other	537	1.8%
Mixed Race	433	1.5%
Hispanic (included in categories above)	1,031	3.5%
Median Family Income (1999)	\$51,804	
Population In Poverty	5,761	25.3%

Bowling Green Climate

Jan Temp	15 to 31 F
Apr Temp	36 to 59 F
Jul Temp	62 to 84 F
Oct Temp	40 to 63 F
Annual Precip	33.1 inches

-Introduction To Bowling Green, Ohio Continued-

Bowling Green Public Libraries

Wood County District Public Library
251 N. Main St.
Bowling Green, Ohio
(419) 352-5104
www.wcdpl.lib.oh.us

Medical Services

Wood County Hospital has been providing quality medical services to the area since 1951. This independent, not-for-profit 162-bed community hospital is located on a 37-acre campus in Bowling Green. Wood County Hospital offers a comprehensive range of inpatient and outpatient health services including: primary care, general surgery, orthopedics and weight loss surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, occupational medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, sleep disorders treatment, radiology and diagnostic services, health education and wellness programming. (www.bowlinggreen-oh.com/commprofile.html)

WOOD COUNTY HOSPITAL (Voluntary non-profit - Private)
950 W Wooster St., Bowling Green OH
www.wch.org

Worship Opportunities

Bowling Green is home to a number of churches and houses of worship:

Abiding Word Evangelical Lutheran Church

17202 Mercer Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Active Christians Today Church

612 E Wooster St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Agape Congregational Church

14867 Mitchell Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Alliance Church

1161 Napoleon Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

-Introduction To Bowling Green, Ohio Continued-

Bowling Green Church of Christ

17317 Haskins Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Bowling Green Covenant Church

1165 Haskins Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Brookside Evangelical Free Church

250 S Main St Apt B,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church of Dowling

22552 Carter Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Christ's Church In Bowling Green

252 S Main St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Church of The Nazarene

15341 Gorrill Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Cloverdale United Methodist Church

8984 Kramer Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Dayspring Assembly of God

17360 N Dixie Hwy,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Faith Temple Family Worship Center

175 State St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

First Baptist Church

749 S Wintergarden Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

First Christian Church/Disciples of Christ

875 Haskins Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

First Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green

126 S Church St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

-Introduction To Bowling Green, Ohio Continued-

First United Methodist Church

1526 E Wooster St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Grace Brethren Church

121 S Enterprise St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Grace Lutheran Church

216 S Main St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Hope Lutheran Church

13507 Cloverdale Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Kingdom Hall of Jehovahs Witness

10444 Bowling Green Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Maumee Valley UU Congregation

20189 N Dixie Hwy,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Northside Baptist Church

701 W Poe Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Peace Lutheran Church

1028 Pearl St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Plain Congregational Church

16011 W Poe Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Seventh Day Adventist Church

331 S Enterprise St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

St Aloysius Catholic Church

148 S Enterprise St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

St Johns Episcopal Church

1505 E Wooster St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

St Marks Lutheran Church

315 S College Dr,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

-Introduction To Bowling Green, Ohio Continued-

St Thomas More University Parish (Catholic)

425 Thurstin St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Sugar Ridge Community Church

1634 Sugar Ridge Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

1033 Conneaut Ave,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

The Salvation Army

419 Lehman Ave,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Trinity United Methodist Church

200 N Summit St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Turning Point Community United Methodist Church

1234 N Main St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Universal Love Metaphysical Church

Bowling Green, OH 43402

Village View Church of Christ

801 W Poe Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Wood County Baptist Church

14161 Dirlam Rd,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Word of Truth Christian Center

100 W Wooster St,
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Information retrieved from www.bowlinggreen-oh.com,
www.citytowninfo.com/places/ohio/bowling-green and www.bgohio.org

CHURCH BUILDING INVENTORY

The present church building is composed of two major sections: the church building which was dedicated in 1922 to replace the previous structure lost by fire, and the educational unit which was added to it in 1962. Upon entering the educational unit from either the front or the rear door, a visitor is led to a large lobby area comfortably furnished with lounge furniture. The church office area, immediately adjacent is the home of a suite of offices for the church staff. It includes separate private offices for the Director of Christian Education, the Office Administrator, and the Pastor. There is also a common work area with the usual assortment of office equipment and an extra desk for whoever may need work space. The Pastor's study is very large and attractively furnished. It has ample room for meeting with small groups. The remainder of the first floor of the educational unit houses five standard classrooms, an ample nursery, a storage closet, and restrooms. An elevator serves all levels of both Buildings.

The second floor of the educational unit has a very large youth lounge which contains a ping pong table, pool table, assorted casual furniture, television set, sound equipment, ample shelving for assorted games and other supplies, and coat racks. A small kitchen is attached. There is also an equipment room, one classroom currently being used for storage, a bell choir room, six conventional classrooms, and restrooms.

On the third floor are three large unfinished rooms and the sexton's office.

The sanctuary and an ample narthex dominate the first floor of the 1922 building. The sanctuary seats 250-300 on the main floor and in the balcony. Cushioned wooden pews are used for seating the congregation. The raised chancel area has a pulpit, lectern, and seating for the choir, preacher, worship leader, and organist [who is seated at a large pipe organ, installed in 1985]. The communion table, baptismal font, and grand piano are on the lower level. Twenty-four beautiful stained glass windows depicting events in the ministry of Jesus line both sides of the sanctuary.

Off a hallway running behind the choir area is found the church library, a large room with lots of shelving for books, two conference tables with chairs for small group meetings. There is also a small kitchen where communion supplies are kept. Adjoining the library is another large room, the Green Lounge, used for adult Sunday school, dressing area for brides and attendants, AA meetings, and similar activities. A baby grand piano is available. Also off that hall is a charming small chapel including pews, a stained glass window, and an electric organ. It is used for small worship events (Maundy Thursday), intimate weddings, private prayer and meditation, and

-Church Building Inventory Continued-

similar events. A storage room is off the chapel and a women's restroom is nearby.

The basement is dominated by the very large reception area (Fellowship Hall) used for refreshments after public worship services, wedding receptions, congregational meals, large meetings, Red Cross blood drive, and the like. A large, well equipped, and recently remodeled kitchen services it. There is also a large storage area for tables, chairs, sound equipment, etc. Off the kitchen can be found a large choir rehearsal room and storage area for choir robes and music, and rehearsal spinet piano. The basement also has a large boiler room and two restrooms.

The Board of Trustees is charged with the responsibility of tending to the upkeep and repair of our aging but eminently serviceable physical plant.

OUTSIDE PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

Perceptions of the church were sought from pastors, church secretaries, and members of other churches in the community. The following comments were received:

“Old church downtown Bowling Green”

“Theologically sound”

“Solid congregation”

“Very fine traditional music program”

“Thoughtful Congregation of thinkers”

“Welcoming”

“Established traditional congregation”

“Active in the Bowling Green Ministerial Association”

“Good sense of community”

“People are nice and they are happy with their church”

“One of the good churches in Bowling Green”

“Involved in the community”

THE CHURCH LAITY

Session Members	12 plus a high school representative
Board of Deacons	12
Board of Trustees	9

Session Standing Committees:

Christian Education	Fellowship
Personnel	Public Relations
Worship	Membership Growth
Music	Mission
Stewardship	Nominating

Trustee Standing Committees:

Budget	Finance	Building Use
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A Memorial/Bequests Committee that serves to receive gifts in 'Memory' of or 'in Honor of' and in cooperation with survivor families and/or donors makes specific recommendations to Session through the Trustees for the use of such gifts.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

As of August 1, 2007 membership was recorded as follows:

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>
14 – 18	9	12	21
19 – 29	14	11	25
30 – 44	34	20	54
45 – 59	30	30	60
60 – 74	49	36	85
75 and over	61	28	89
Unknown	5	3	8
TOTALS	202	140	342

YOUTH – CHURCH SCHOOL POTENTIAL

Pre – School	7
K – 6	11
7 and 8	7
High School	15

HOUSEHOLDS REPRESENTED

With children living at home or children in college still maintaining their home address	29
Married with no children living at home	75
Single with no children living at home	73
Living with children or at assisted living center	24
Living more than 25 miles from Bowling Green	13
TOTAL	214

ABOUT THE 2007 APPROVED OPERATING BUDGET

A balanced budget in the amount of \$311,710 was approved by Session in January of 2007.

Projected Sources of Income:

Pledged Giving	\$265,000	(\$256,000 +/- Pledged)
Other Giving	16,000	
Rental/Other	23,010	
Prior Year Carry Over	7,700	(2006 Pastoral Vacancy)

Allocated For:

Pastor's Compensation and Benefits	\$74,115
Youth (Christian Education)	36,104
Music	35,815*
General Adm./Office	32,647
Benevolences – PC (USA)	34,880
Benevolences – Local	10,700
Per Capita – PC (USA)	9,265
Session Committees/Other	3,430
Building Maintenance	74,754

*And supplemented annually (\$4500 +/-) from a Restricted Fund for BGSU Student scholarships.

Support Staff Summary

Full Time - Office Administrator, Sexton Music Director, Organist

Compensation - \$73,945

Part Time - C.E. Dir., Children's Choir Dir., Youth Dir., Sunday Child Care Provider

Compensation - \$ 27,775

Total Compensation including Benefits - \$111,930

STEWARDSHIP AND MISSION

The membership of the First Presbyterian Church has dedicated itself to a variety of mission projects by committing financial, material and physical support. Members have been participating in mission trips to rebuild and revitalize homes in rural, impoverished areas since the early 1990's. More recently, our congregation has embraced a mission project in Haiti providing for various needs. Several local programs have benefited from the financial support of our Mission Committee and active support of our members including Martha's Kitchen (a local soup kitchen), Habitat for Humanity, Wood County CASA, the Cocoon Shelter (for abused women), and the Salvation Army. Over the years, many programs for migrant workers and their families have been sponsored by or housed in our church. Our facility also has been made available for meetings of many community groups including Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Girl Scouts, Maumee Valley Presbytery committees and other community groups. The YMCA rents three of our classroom and a restroom for a year-round day-care center.

The deacons of our church sponsor many long-standing outreach projects that serve the needs of our community. The Deacons Shop located in our education wing has been collecting clothing and house wares for free distribution to migrants and other needy families for more than 35 years. The annual Deacons' Christmas party, another long standing project, provides breakfast, toys and food baskets to Wood County residents in need. The congregation helps support this project by wrapping gifts, volunteering at the party and contributing funds. The Red Cross Blood Drive is a summer project sponsored by the deacons and involving many of our members. The deacons can always be counted on to offer hospitality to international students, aid transients and others who have inadequate finances, visit nursing homes and provide needed services to those in the congregation and larger community who need assistance. Other projects include a Book Fair to raise funds, participation in the Crop Walk and hosting a Bike And Build Group overnight.

Presbyterian Women support a number of mission and service projects in the church. They raise funds to support projects by the contributions of members, preparing and selling mincemeat, and preparing and serving meals for receptions and for the congregation. Last year they helped fund a sanitary improvement mission project in Haiti, provided financial aid to three elementary children in Haiti, made contributions to a local battered women's shelter and Habitat for Humanity, assembled dental kits and supported the Nickels for Nets program. They collected Birthday and Thank offerings. As a service, the organization takes orders from the congregation for flowers to decorate the sanctuary at Easter and Christmas and then delivers the flowers to shut-ins.

-Stewardship And Mission Continued-

The youth of the church through the Sunday School and the Youth Fellowship programs participate in many fundraising projects such as preparing meals, selling craft items, and washing cars to help support various mission projects, including the mission in Haiti. The older youth have participated in mission trips to help maintain Christian camp facilities and rebuild homes. A Christmas “Mitten Tree” placed in the church Narthex by the children each year invites contributions of hats, mittens and scarves for children in need. The Sunday School program also participates in the One Great Hour of Sharing.

Our congregation provides financial support for the Presbyterian Church missions as well as many special offerings including:

- Christmas Joy Offering
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Peacemaking Offering
- Pentecost Offering
- Blanket Sunday
- 2 Cents a Meal Offering

Christian Education

Christian education classes for the Sprouts (elementary school age), Junior and Senior High and adults are held on Sundays following the church service and coffee “hour”. Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers during the worship service. Young children age 4 through 5th grade who accompany their parents to the worship service have the opportunity to leave the sanctuary before the sermon and attend their own Junior Worship in the Sunday School wing. A confirmation class that meets during the Sunday School time is scheduled every other year. Adult education programs are available after worship on varying topics of current interest or concern, as well as Bible study. A recent program examined the More Light movement in the Presbyterian Church and the related issues surrounding homosexuality.

First Presbyterian Church has teamed with the First United Methodist Church for a successful Vacation Bible School program for ages five through grade 8. Volunteers from both churches plan and staff the program which is held at the First United Methodist Church for a week in June.

Prime Time is our Wednesday night program and includes a congregational dinner followed by crafts and music for children. The children’s bell choir, Presby

-Stewardship And Mission Continued-

Overtones' practices on this night. During Lent a special adult education program is offered following the meal. The Youth Fellowship groups have also met on Wednesday nights to plan their activities such as fundraisers for outreach programs or mission trips.

Christian Education organizes many special events such as Rally Day (the first day of Sunday school), Youth Sunday, Bible Sunday, Christmas programs, the Harvest Party, a Thanksgiving congregational meal and a holiday craft show. Multiple retreats are held during the year for the Sprouts, Junior and Senior High groups and confirmation class.

Worship

First Presbyterian has a weekly 10:00 am service in which worshipers are encouraged to get up and greet their neighbors, and later are invited to share their joys and concerns with the congregation. Lay leaders participate in each service and communion is generally offered the first Sunday of the month. Special services held in the sanctuary include two Christmas Eve Services, Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. A Maundy Thursday service is held in the chapel and the Ash Wednesday service is held in the Fellowship Hall following a congregational meal. Our church also participates in community Good Friday and Thanksgiving services which are held at different local churches each year. Every summer, our congregation enjoys an informal, outdoor service in a local park with Bluegrass music provided by local musicians and followed by a potluck lunch.

Music Program

The music program at First Presbyterian consists of the Chancel Choir and two bell choirs - the Tintinnabulators for teens and adults and the Presby Overtones for children. Our bell choirs participate in a regional bell festival every other year and a community performance at the University Planetarium. Our children's bell choir also performs at the local mall and/or nursing homes during the Christmas holidays. We have also had a children's choir offered through Sunday School or our Wednesday evening program.

The proximity of the Bowling Green State University has allowed our music program to take advantage of the musical talents of the BGSU students and faculty. Twice a year, our choir performs a cantata during our Sunday service featuring the special talents of our choir and local musicians. The music program often collaborates with

-Stewardship And Mission Continued-

Christian Education to produce a Christmas pageant or other special music programs for the holidays. The Orwig Recital is held each year to raise funds for the music program by showcasing local musical talent.

Fellowship

Our Fellowship committee hosts the coffee and treats social time following our service, as well as our summer potluck following our outdoor service and other special recognition events during the year. Through the Christian Education Prime Time program, Wednesday night dinners are offered in the Fellowship Hall either in the form of a potluck or a meal prepared by church members for a minimal fee. Special lunches and dinners offered as mission fundraisers, such as our tailgate picnic, also provide enjoyable fellowship time. A new adult fellowship program was begun this year called Movie and Dinner Night to provide a fun, entertaining evening out with friends. Presbyterian Women hosts a women's retreat, holds a special gathering each Spring and Fall and also meets in small group circles for special study. A women's book study group has developed as an off-shoot from the Circles

IDENTIFYING OUR CONGREGATION: COMMENTS FROM THE FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE DISCUSSIONS

- ***Positive traits of our membership***

First Presbyterian Church has been a presence in the downtown of Bowling Green, Ohio, for over 150 years. In both our professional activities and in our faith lives, the members of the congregation have engaged actively in the community. Serving as business and civic leaders and creating service programs in Bowling Green as well as long-distance mission projects, we have been part of a growing city for decades. As the local university expanded, many of the congregation members were associated with it as faculty and staff. There is a tremendous pool of talent—intellectual, occupational, missional—among the membership. Members tend to be politically progressive, accepting of diversity, and compassionate. We are generous when appeals for support are made: building maintenance and enhancement, special mission and needs, a one-time event or project.

-Identifying Our Congregation:
Comments From The Fellowship Circle Discussions
Continued-

Demographically the congregation is an older one. We are a group who seeks spiritual challenges and individual and collective commitment to service. We have always had a traditional worship service, which evolves, albeit slowly, when there is a perceived need to re-pattern worship. First Presbyterian has a rich history as a church in Bowling Green, but as we look ahead, we see the need for revitalization. We are traditionalist enough to want to preserve the heritage we love, but also open-minded and pragmatic enough to see the need to complement our past with new elements that will help us grow stronger as a faith community in the future.

- *Aspects for concern*

Much of what creates concern among the congregation springs from precisely who we are: an aging group of believers, worshipping in an aging church building, a group of self-starting individuals who tend to “do their own thing”. Issues of mobility restrict involvement by seniors in potential fellowship activities. Our church programs meet the needs of our current members, but they do not appeal to contemporary young adults and young families. Indeed, involvement by our youth is very limited. The attendance is generally small, even though our worship service offers thought-provoking sermons and superb formal music. Members have long friendships with other members, but we do not reach out well to newcomers. We are not good at promoting our strengths, responding to challenges from conservatives and high-intensity evangelicals, or bringing in and retaining new members. A declining membership negatively impacts church programs and financial viability.

OUR NEW PASTOR: GIFTS, QUALITIES, AND EXPERIENCES: COMMENTS FROM THE FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE DISCUSSIONS

It is key that our new pastor have experience [and formal training, if possible] in church revitalization. In order to help us take our strengths into new areas for our faith, we are seeking a leader who:

- is a “teaching elder”. It is essential that we have a gifted preacher whose substantive sermons and other areas of involvement in congregational life will help us grow spiritually.
- relates well to the older members who comprise a large segment of our congregation. However, we also seek a person who can help us reach out to children, youth, and young adults.
- is a good administrator who can lead our staff and elicit support for them from the membership.
- provides pastoral support for the More Light movement, which is part of our progressive stance on social issues.
- is open-minded and flexible, someone who can both lead and learn.
- has the skills to recruit and empower members to use their gifts and expand their efforts.
- has relevant experience in a pastorate.

KEY THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

First Presbyterian Church believes that its mission should be driven by the priorities that Jesus gave us:

“The most important one is this: ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second most important commandment is this: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself. There is no other commandment more important than these two.” (Mark 12: 29-31)

On our journey to fulfill our mission, we need to remember that these commandments take precedence over any other considerations or laws.

Jesus tells us how to live these commandments. The good Samaritan, despised because he did not follow the purity laws, is the person we should imitate. The good Samaritan put the well-being of his neighbor, a stranger in trouble, above his own needs. He gave his time, his money, and his love. Jesus tells us, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

As we work to imitate the good Samaritan in the 21st century, we should remember these guidelines from *Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture*, PCUSA position paper (1983):

1. Scripture has priority, but not exclusivity.
2. Knowledge that comes from observation, research, and human experience is important.
3. The Living Christ is central.
4. Scripture must be interpreted by scripture.
5. Scripture must be interpreted by the rule of love.
6. Scripture must be interpreted by the rule of faith.
7. All interpretation of Scripture is fallible.
8. God's Holy Spirit guides all Scripture interpretation.
9. Interpretation of Scripture requires the use of all relevant guidelines.

In other words, as their pastor said to the Pilgrim Fathers as the Mayflower was about to set sail for America, “God has yet more light to break forth from his Holy Word.”