

Final DRAFT

Mission Study

Presbyterian Church at Hammonton

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Prepared by

Mission Study Team

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BACKGROUND

The Mission Study has been prepared to support the formal process required by Presbytery to search for and call a designated pastor to serve at the Presbyterian Church at Hammonton.

In February 2014 the Session of Hammonton Presbyterian Church appointed a mission study team and charged it with the task of preparing this mission study. The goals of the Mission Study were to look at the church's programs and processes to determine if they are consistent with the church's mission and vision and effective in reaching their goals, to chart a direction for the long term and to provide a profile of the church in the short term to support the work of a Pastor Nominating Committee.

The Session chose the following people to be on the Mission Study Team: Erika Lower (Elder and Co-Moderator), Beth Burkett (Elder, Co-Moderator), Anne Orthner, Marge Gosney, Frank Johnson and Ruth DiMeo

Pastor Susan worked with the team in an advisory capacity throughout the process. We thank her for her efforts and concerns.

OUR CHURCH HISTORY

Missionaries from the Presbytery of West Jersey started work in the newly established Town of Hammonton in the 1850s. A board of trustees for the church was formed in 1859, and in 1861 the congregation was organized as the Presbyterian Church at Hammonton. The church completed the first building in 1866. The church has strong associations with the nearby Methodist and Baptists churches.

Concerned that the church location was away from the developing business area, the congregation moved the building down the road to the present site in 1879. A new parsonage was constructed behind the church in 1881. This currently houses the Director of Spanish Ministry.

The church performed considerable missionary work in the area. Sabbath school missions were established in three settlement areas outside of Hammonton in 1887. Missionary work among Italian immigrants started in 1889, which led to the development of the Italian Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Hammonton. In 1895, the old church building was moved two blocks away for use by this new congregation, and a new larger church building was completed in 1896. Around this time, the church reported Sunday School enrollment of over 271 people. The church began calling itself the First Presbyterian Church of Hammonton at this time.

In 1912, the session was given oversight of the failing Italian church which closed within a few years. The Sabbath School missions also closed during this period, and membership constricted.

In 1917, a pipe organ was installed in the church. Other improvements were made to the church building over the years to accommodate new features such as electricity, city water, and central heat. A new manse next door to the church was purchased in 1926. The great depression hit the church hard, even with continued membership growth. In 1935, the finances were in bad shape, with a leaking church roof, \$3,500 in mortgage on the manse, salary and pension not fully paid to the pastor, and a 3¢ cash balance on hand. Church membership and Sunday School continued a gradual, steady growth.

In 1955, women were elected to the Session for the first time. The congregation was cramped for space. The congregation decided to construct a new education building, completed in 1963, on the site of the manse adjacent to the church. A new manse away from the church facilities was purchased. Membership continued to grow. The sanctuary was modernized in 1969.

In the 1960s, mission work was started among the Spanish-speaking people in the area. The Spanish ministry was supported by churches all over New Jersey. The ministry grew over the years, and eventually was fully merged into the congregation of the church with an associate pastor to lead this ministry. As an offshoot of the Spanish ministry, clothing and food ministries were started to supply clothing and food to those in need in the town.

In the 1970s, the congregation purchased the land behind the church, including two houses, for future expansion and/or parking. The church provided space for community organizations and programs for migrant workers. Membership peaked around 370. The congregation changed to a unicameral structure, eliminating the separate Board of Trustees. In 1975, a Board of Deacons was formed to better serve the needs of the congregation and community.

The Spanish ministry was never been self-supporting, and outside funding for the Spanish ministry changed significantly over the years, resulting eventually in the loss of the associate pastor and part-time lay leadership. In 2005, the congregation attempted to revitalize the dwindling Spanish ministry by calling a part-time associate pastor. A Transformational Ministries grant allowed the church to increase the associate pastor's hours to full time. The church worked to become multi-cultural.

In 2010, the congregation completed renovations to the church and education buildings to make them handicapped accessible, including the installation of two new restrooms, an elevator, and complete renovation of the sanctuary.

The economic downturn, declining income and increased budget costs necessitated significant budget cuts and staff reductions in the last several years. The associate pastor position hours were reduced, and then the position was eliminated. The Spanish ministry is currently led by a part-time director. Some other part-time jobs were eliminated. Currently, the congregation is providing most maintenance and cleaning work for the facilities.

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Session/Deacon Organization

Our session consists of 12 Elders. There are currently seven committees working under the session:

Personnel	Buildings and Grounds
Christian Education	Worship
Spanish Ministry	nominating (congregational committee)
Finance	

A Board of Deacons conducts their ministry through various activities. There are currently 12 members on the board.

Church Staff

We have a full and part-time paid staff of five individuals. The full-time Pastor provides spiritual care and leadership for all in the church family and is head of staff for the other employees. Part time employees include the Director of Spanish Ministry, the office manager, the choir director/organist, and the accompanist for the Spanish-language service.

Church Budget

For the year 2013, our church had income of \$167,562 with \$147,293 provided through pledges. Total expenses for 2013 were \$175,598 producing a deficit of (\$8,036). For the year 2012, income was \$173,959 with expenses of \$174,664 producing a deficit of (\$704.37). Our budget for 2014 is \$187, 379.

The church has a loan through the Presbyterian Church Investment and Loan Program that was used to assist in financing sanctuary and accessibility renovations completed in 2010. The loan was originally for \$335,000. The loan balance as of 12/31/13 was \$160,094 with loan payments of \$23,196 made in 2013. The church has no other indebtedness.

Process

The team sought input from the congregation in all aspects of the study. The interviews and surveys were directed towards recommending actions for change and growth by answering the following questions:

1. What are our strengths?
2. What could we do better?
3. What is most important in a new pastor?
4. What direction would you like to see our new pastor take the church?
5. Any thoughts on the Spanish Ministry?

The first meeting of the team was held on February 25, 2014. The mission study team engaged the congregation in the following ways:

1. Invitational phone calls went out to all members inviting all to attend Church on Sunday, April 13 to complete the Mission Study Congregational Survey. A broad range of questions were asked regarding theology, community issues, program ministries and processes.
2. A Mission Study Congregational Survey was distributed on April 13th after worship, 90 surveys were returned, which represents 54% of our current membership.
3. After the survey, 10 information gathering meetings were held at various homes with approximately 70 members participating. At the meetings the participants expressed their assumptions about the life of the church and the work God has called us to do.

The mission study team met every week from February to September to pray, plan, review, discuss, evaluate and summarize the collected information.

A review of congregational survey results and the small group discussions are described below:

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we can look at how to meet the needs of our congregation, we have to look at the community we come from. We looked at the demographic reports for a 10 mile radius around our church and found that Hammonton is not a town that is experiencing the same type of

growth as other towns in our area and country (Hammonton reported only a quarter of the growth reported by other towns nationwide). Hammonton's population as of 2012 was 14,751. 30% of the households reported to have children in the homes.

26% of the population is over 65 years of age.

75% of households were White (non-Hispanic),

13% were Hispanic.

A significant portion of the Hammonton population (primarily middle of the town geographically) speaks only Spanish.

Average income is over \$80,000 yearly (higher than the US average) but there is a large gap between incomes (32% over \$100,000 and 29% under \$40,000).

Lastly and most importantly... 53.2 % of the population is considered "unclaimed" by any specific religious denomination.

TEN YEAR TRENDS

Average worship dropped by 20 since 2007, but remained relatively unchanged in the 5 years prior to 2007. Christian Education attendance has remained fairly steady over the last 10 years. Total membership has been showing a slow gradual decline.

Total contributions for our congregation are significantly less than the PCUSA reported average. (PCUSA average \$1,207.05 per member, Hammonton Presbyterians \$966.00 average per member)

SURVEY RESULTS

The congregational survey was administered on a Sunday at the end of the church service and had 90 total responses (English and Spanish speaking members, combined). Alternate times were offered to individuals who were not available or felt they would need prolonged amount of time. Based on our congregational survey and compared to other churches our size or slightly larger, our strengths include spiritual growth, meaningful worship, congregational participation, and our sense of belonging. Areas that we could be more focused on include looking into our future, welcoming new worshippers, empowering leadership within the congregation, sharing our faith and having a focus on our community.

We discovered that the survey results did not necessarily match what people were telling us in our focus group discussions. Based on the congregant's ability to elaborate on their feelings/statements during the small groups, we felt that the small group strengths and weaknesses were probably a more accurate depiction of our congregation.

What we learned from Focus Group Discussions

1) Strengths (What we do well)

- a. Food/Clothing ministries
- b. Social activities (potlucks, coffee hour, etc.)
- c. Welcoming and Friendly
- d. Community involvement (i.e., AA, Boy/Girl Scouts)
- e. Handicap accessible
- f. Music
- g. Location
- h. Christian Education
- i. Deacons

2) Weaknesses (What we can do better)

- a. Maintenance of facilities
- b. Fundraising
- c. Marketing/Social Media/advertising
- d. Get more people involved, same people doing everything
- e. Youth group
- f. Communications both within and outside of church
- g. Follow-up with inactive and new members
- h. Additional worship services on day other than Sunday
- i. Mentor new members
- j. More dinners for 6/8, congregational activities

3) Pastor Qualities

- a. Focused and biblical based Sermons
- b. Follow-up with current members when not in attendance for a period of time and new members
- c. Be able to delegate
- d. Bi-Lingual
- e. Collaborative
- f. Spiritual
- g. Good Administrator and financial
- h. Has a family
- i. Good with children

4) Direction of the Church

- a. Growth/increase membership
- b. Better marketing and advertising of our activities, etc.
- c. Update/create Social media
- d. More community involvement
- e. Youth Group/Activities
- f. Non-traditional Worship Service on a day other than Sunday
- g. Financial Stability

5) Spanish Ministry

- a. Growth/increase membership
- b. Have we met our mission/needs with this ministry
- c. Keep separate – not similar worship styles
- d. Most do not like the combined services
- e. Pastor Martin is well-liked and approachable

SUMMARY

Based on the information received from the survey, demographics and small groups the following is a summarization of items the group felt needed the most attention.

Finances

In 2007, the congregation took on an ambitious project of seeking to expand our Spanish Ministry and making our sanctuary more accessible. The church received a Presbytery Transformational Grant for 5 years to assist in the Spanish Ministry effort. We also obtained a PLIP loan of \$335,000 to help fund the needed facility improvements. Our activities included conducting a major fundraising campaign that resulted in pledges of \$337,890; hiring a full-time bilingual Associate Pastor to focus on the Spanish Ministry; renovating a home we owned to serve as a manse for the new Pastor; and renovating our sanctuary permitting handicap accessibility at a cost of \$407,452.

Unfortunately, our Spanish Ministry did not grow. Subsequently, we reduced the bilingual pastor to part-time status and eliminated part-time positions of Choir Director and Custodian. These actions have somewhat stabilized our financial situation. However, the annual loan payments have placed a strain on our operating budget. Furthermore, we have urgent building repairs that will require funding in excess of \$30,000. The congregation has responded to a recent targeted fundraising campaign. We have pledges of over \$25,000 and received over \$24,000 for the building fund. We have also received pledges of \$12,214 additional funds for the annual operating budget. As has been our tradition, the congregation has responded well to the needs of our church.

Current actual expenses are exceeding our budget and income received. While we have a group of members who do tithe, there is a large portion of the congregation that do not.

Spanish Ministry

Somewhere around 1960, the church felt it was called to address the needs of Spanish-speaking Protestants in the area. We had many Spanish-speaking Protestants in Hammonton with no place to worship. We were happy that they found a home with us. They were active and involved. Over the years however, changes have occurred which included issues with Pastors, and active lay-leaders left for various reasons. This left a significant gap within the Spanish Ministry. We currently have a part-time minister dedicated to the Spanish-speaking ministry but this does not fully meet the needs of this population who would prefer a full-time minister who would be more available to them. We do not know how long this part-time position will even be staffed due to the fact that this part-time minister has taken another full-time job.

We believe the members are still happy, but they are not actively involved in running of the church as active participants in committees or on session.

Additionally, several fully Spanish-speaking churches have been opened in the Hammonton area. This eliminates the void that once existed.

Language barriers and cultural differences make it difficult to blend the English-speaking and the Spanish-speaking members. Combined services utilizing both English and Spanish are not well received by either the English-speaking or Spanish-speaking members. Again, the cultural and verbal differences are significant.

Spanish-speaking members are worried that the Presbyterian Church at Hammonton may not provide a place of worship for them. The English-speaking members worry that we might not be able to afford to continue the Spanish-speaking ministry. Many wonder if the initial mission of providing a Spanish ministry at the Presbyterian Church at Hammonton has been accomplished.

Type of Leader needed

Overall, there is consensus about what is important to our congregation in a new minister. Core traits/abilities that we have been fortunate to have experienced and hope to continue include: personal warmth and compassion, visits to members who are ill or grieving, conducting Bible Study sessions, sermons that are Scripture-based with a clear message that doesn't get lost, willingness to participate in and guide various church committees, manage administrative needs and personnel, and make connections in the community.

In addition, given the issues highlighted in the sections above, a leader that is comfortable addressing Stewardship needs would clearly benefit this congregation. Openly discussing the budget and expenses allows every member to not only be informed, but to understand specifically why their monetary donations are needed and where those donations go. Also, a willingness to brainstorm possible fundraising options would likely motivate members to involve themselves in new and unexpected ways.

A Minister that could support both the English-speaking members and the Spanish-speaking members is also important should a decision be made to continue providing for the Spanish-speaking members, a bi-lingual Minister would be able to serve both English and Spanish members. A Minister that meets all of our needs and is willing and committed to learning Spanish could be an option.

We would be asking a lot of one person. Therefore, it would be important to find someone who can delegate prudently and is willing to work with the lay-leaders as well as one who can inspire

and encourage the capabilities available by among the members of this congregation. This would encourage a shared ownership for the future health of our church.

A Minister that can find ways for the congregation to become more involved in our community is something our congregation has diligently expressed an interest. This will accomplish two things for us. It will benefit the community and will also make us more visible. Whether we clean up grounds somewhere or serve meals or offer other services, if the community as a whole is better for it, then we have accomplished a goal. While doing these activities, we are interacting with people other than current members of our church. This could potentially lead to people finding our church as a perfect church home for them.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

After much thought, prayer and consideration, the Mission Study Team has recommendations in the three following areas:

- 1) Spanish Ministry – the following choices are submitted to the session and congregation for consideration:
 - a. Continue as is
 - b. Dissolve immediately
 - c. Dissolve after Pastor Martin leaves
 - d. Seek a Bi-Lingual Pastor
 - e. Make them an independent congregation

- 2) Areas of Growth needed in the Congregation:
 - a. Financial
 - b. Numerical, including bringing younger families into the congregation
 - c. Spiritual

- 3) New Community Mission
 - a. To become more active and involved in the community including youth activities