



2019 MISSION STUDY REPORT

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SAN ANSELMO



September 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

When Joanne Whitt announced her retirement after 14 years as Pastor and Head of Staff, she reminded us of the well-known passage from Ecclesiastes: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.”

A pastoral transition is many seasons wrapped into one. It’s a time to say goodbye, a time to celebrate the ministry we have shared with a beloved pastor, and a time to take stock and ask questions: Who are we now as a congregation? Where is God leading us? It’s also a time to look forward with hope, gratitude, and even excitement.

It is with this sense of God’s purpose for our congregation that the Mission Study Team presents our report in the following pages. A mission study provides us with the space and time to process feelings, to consider who we are today (and the path that brought us here), and to discern who God is calling us to be. Perhaps most important, it helps us to envision the pastoral leadership we will need to walk with us on the next stage of our journey together.


As part of the mission study process, we gathered demographic data to see what trends we might address in our community, studied the church’s history, talked to community leaders, and asked you to describe and imagine what our church can be at its best—in your life as well as the lives of those we serve and work amongst.

Throughout our conversations with you and reflections with each other, we’ve learned that First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo is blessed with the location, the facilities, and the people to make a real difference in the Marin community for decades to come. Imagine all that we can be!

We are deeply grateful for the grace of God and for the gift of this community—for the insights, aspirations, and support you have afforded during this self-study process. We look forward with eagerness to the next chapter in our remarkable journey.

Mission Study Team 2019

Laurie Buntain, John Cowperthwaite, Erica Heath, David Jones, Martha Joyce, Margaret Melsh, Raquel Nelson, Joanne Whitt



*“To everything there
is a season, and a
time to every purpose
under heaven”*

Ecclesiastes 3:1

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Who We Are



Our Vision

We envision a world transformed and made whole through God's love as demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We are called to love one another, express gratitude, ease suffering, and work for justice.



Our Purpose

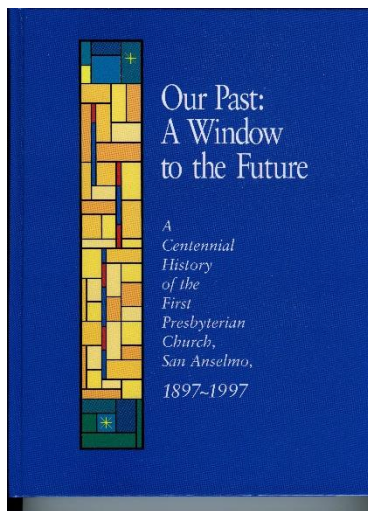
We come from all walks of life and diverse faith traditions, but we share a common purpose—to grow in love for neighbor, self, Earth, and God. All of us, believing and doubting, are companions on the journey, together leaning into our faith as we confront complex issues of compassion, justice, faith, and love.

A Brief History

The title of our church centennial publication, *“Our Past: A Window to the Future”*, acknowledges the existence of recurring themes throughout our history. The people and the buildings have changed, but many of the hopes and aspirations have remained constant.

In the beginning

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo was founded in 1897 to minister to the families and friends of the San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS). For the first 50 years the congregation worshipped at Montgomery Chapel located on the Seminary grounds. We later moved to our present location, with Duncan Hall completed in 1950, the Sanctuary completed in 1958, and the education building completed in 1968.



“Our Past: A Window to the Future” won the Robert Lee Stowe Award for 1998 given by the Presbyterian Historical Society “for the best published history of an American Presbyterian or Reformed congregation.”

Our path from past to present is marked by many pivotal moments — stepping stones that have brought us to where we are today.

In 1906 Dr. Thomas Day, a seminary professor and leader in our congregation was charged with heresy for “bringing historical criticism to teaching of the Old Testament.” His questions about the virgin birth caused him to claim that modern scientific thought was not inimical to revealed religion. Our strong connection with the people and spirit of SFTS has continued. Seminary students serve as our interns and often staff our children and youth programs, Seminary graduates have become our pastors, and Seminary faculty members have, through the years, challenged us theologically and intellectually. Our recent congregational survey confirmed the high value placed on intellectual curiosity and rigor in preaching of the Word.

Pivotal progressive moments

In 1930, our session, along with the national church, supported gender equality and narrowly voted in favor of ordaining women as elders. In spite of this seemingly progressive stance, it was not until 1960 that

our first woman elder, Bertha Davie, was actually elected. The role of women in the governance of the church and the recognition of women's issues accelerated during the ensuing decades. In 2001, session stood up for our friend Katie Morrison and endorsed her call to become the first openly gay person to be ordained in the PCUSA. Her ordination was eventually approved by Presbytery of the Redwoods and later, in 2003, was upheld by GA. In 2005 we called the Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, our first woman head pastor. The congregation was blessed with Pastor Whitt's ever relevant, authentic and inspiring sermons and leadership for 14 years, longer than any other pastor in the history of the church.

Our musical heritage

In 1953, Wilbur Russell, the SFTS organ instructor, was hired as our organist and director of music. This chance union initiated a "golden age" of music which has continued to grow, emerge, and change over time. Our sanctuary, dedicated in 1958, with its high wooden arches and peaked ceiling, provides an excellent acoustical environment. We are blessed with two magnificent organs. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed growth in membership resulting in no less than five choirs with 180 voices. This was followed by an era of critically acclaimed organ recitals and festivals.

Wil Russell remained our beloved organist and Professor of Music at SFTS until his death in 1997. The high quality musical tradition he began was carried on by music directors Sally Johnson and Martha Wall. In 2011, the talented conductor Daniel Canosa joined our staff as music director. Under his leadership,

the music program has grown to include fully orchestrated choir performances and multiple adjunct concerts by professional and nonprofessional companies including Marin Baroque and Echo Chamber Orchestra. In 2016 our choir, accompanied by a stunning video, delivered a moving performance of "The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace." Later, as the single representative from the United States, the choir joined other choirs from around the world to perform this piece in Carnegie Hall.

Social justice and activism

In 1967, at the constant urging of Royce Truex, session adopted an activist definition of the church's mission. We declared that God's gift of unconditional love and reconciliation through Jesus Christ frees us to be agents of love and reconciliation in the world. Since the 1960s the identity of First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo has been shaped in large part by its work for justice in the world. Ever since, the strong desire for racial equality, affordable housing, and the eradication of hunger have been continuing themes. They have compelled the congregation to join the civil rights movement, create low cost housing for seniors, welcome refugees and feed and shelter those experiencing homelessness.

The issues we face in the new millennium have led us to expand the response to God's call in the world. We have taken stands on social justice issues including Israel-Palestine, torture, and gay ordination, to name a few. The congregation's urgent response to climate change has resulted in our hosting multiple earth-related community forums, divestment from fossil fuels, and participation in public demonstrations related to global warming.

This statement, found on our website to describe who we are, echoes our deep heritage in social justice, our ability to wrestle with big questions, and our commitment to welcome all who seek to follow Jesus.

“Warm and welcoming.
Intelligent and engaged.
Faithful and hopeful.
We are a community of people who seek to follow Jesus, and every day we work to figure out what that means. We start with knowing that God's love transforms us and calls us to serve others, address the causes of injustice, and seek peace.”

Church Membership and Demographics

Our congregation's growth and shrinkage mirrors many of the changes in religious institutions in the United States. From a high of a little over 1000 members in 1968, our church has experienced a steady decline in membership. By 1980 the congregation was about 700 members. By 2013 it was 330 members.

Over the last 5 years our membership has stabilized. During this time (2013-2018), we have had 50 new members, 48 deceased members, and about 10 members who moved away. In 2018 we experienced a slight upward trend in membership, with a net increase of 10 members. Our official membership declined from 330 to 250 over the last 5 years primarily because we removed 69 people from our membership rolls who had been inactive for many years. We also have many people who regularly attend worship and actively participate in our congregational life but have not formally joined the church.

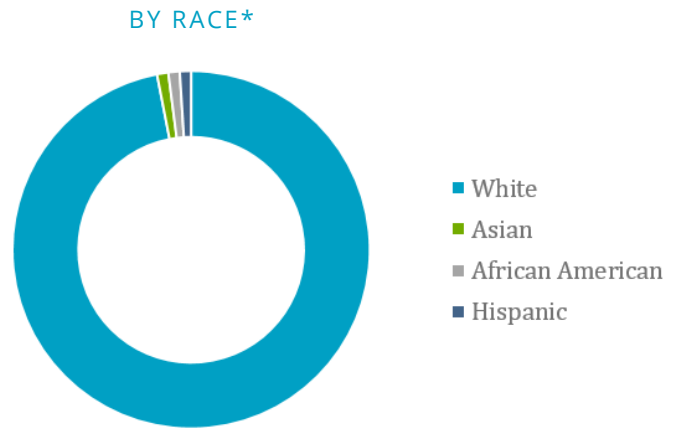
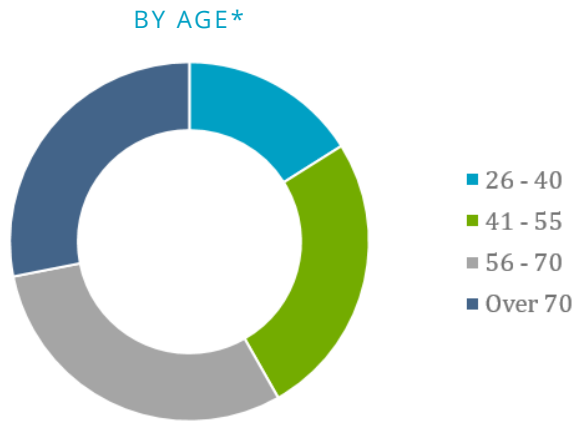
Sunday morning worship attendance, while shrinking, averages about 45% of the membership. Average attendance for Easter and Christmas is between 115% and 145% of membership.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
MEMBERSHIP						
New	15	6	3	5	6	15
Deceased	7	15	11	6	7	2
Other	-1	-1	-37*	-1	-32*	-3
End of Year	330	320	275	273	240	250
ATTENDANCE						
Average Sunday	150	141	131	123	114	114
Largest Service of Year	380	384	400	270	276	290
ATTENDANCE/MEMBERSHIP						
% Average Sunday as % of Membership	45.4%	44.1%	47.8%	44.9%	47.7%	45.5%
Largest Service as % of Membership	115.2%	120.0%	145.5%	98.9%	115.0%	116.0%

*= an adjustment to the rolls

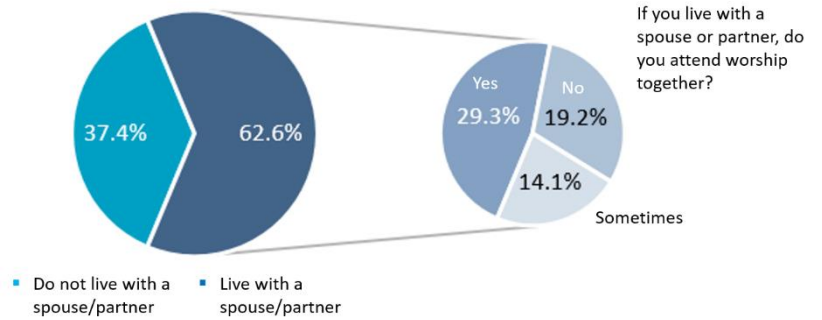
BY THE NUMBERS

Active Membership

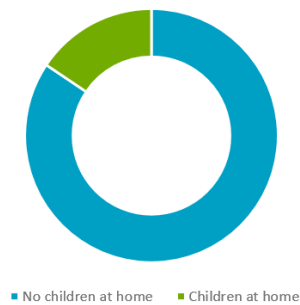


*these figures do not include about 40 "friends of the congregation" who are a part of our community but have not become members.

Fewer than 30% of our members regularly attend church with a spouse or partner.



Most members do not have children living at home.



Strengths & Opportunities

A season of discernment

In June and July of 2019, the Mission Study Team asked members and friends of this congregation to share their hopes and concerns during this time of transition. We held an all-church workshop on June 2, 2019 and also captured answers to questions through a survey conducted during June and July, 2019.

See the Appendix for complete survey findings.

In addition to the 2019 all-church workshop and congregational survey, we have been having congregational conversations in a “season of discernment” since 2015:

- As a result of a budget deficit in 2014, the Resources Committee initiated a visioning process in early 2015. We asked “Where Is God Taking Us?” followed by a congregational workshop to map out how to financially support our vision.
- In September 2016 we kicked off a year-long “Next Level” project with the Center for Progressive Renewal in order to move more intentionally into a sustainable future.
- In June, 2017 the Church launched a capital campaign. As part of the preparation and planning, we included large group, small group, and individual meetings to envision where we want to be as a congregation and the role we want to play in this community.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

How do you feel about this church?

Scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high); ratings of 4 or 5 are shown below.

88%

“The fellowship I feel from others is warm and personal.”

85%

“Sunday Worship at First Pres is alive and compelling.”

83%

“Our church community is cooperative and trusting.”

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

What’s most important to you?

80%

Being in community with others

51%

Listening to good sermons

44%

Experiencing great music

42%

Growing spiritually

Through these multiple congregational “conversations” we see our strengths and opportunities in three dimensions:

1 Our Worship

“Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, there is a place for you here.” In our Sunday worship, we honor tradition even as we explore ways to bring Christ’s teachings into a modern context. Sermons are relevant and inspiring. Many people appreciate the excellent music. Children are welcome and included. We are deeply committed to hospitality as a ministry and welcome visitors and newcomers warmly.

There is more work to be done. In Marin, Sunday worship competes with sports, recreation, downtime, and family time. We need to continue to find ways to draw in younger people as well as those who did not grow up in church. A generation ago the youth group had a well-loved leader and a strong participation rate. In the last decade or so, ministry to teenagers has struggled and weakened due in large part to a lack of consistent and strong leadership. We recently hired Patrick O’Connor as the Director of Family Ministries. He is making the development and growth of a vibrant youth group one of his main goals.

2 Our Community

When we ask people what draws them to this church, the answer is community—more than sermons, great music, or spiritual growth.

People feel a sense of belonging and acceptance here. Sunday morning worship is one of the strongest ways we experience community as a congregation. We are also proud of the programs we offer to build community beyond Sunday morning, including small groups, service opportunities, and fellowship events. Recognizing that church happens anywhere, we are making great strides to connect with people in the digital world through our website, sermon feeds, email updates, and Facebook.

We continue to seek ways to balance new practices with “the way we’ve always done things.” Our older members feel left out of digital forms of communication and prefer mailings (which are more resource-intensive). Newcomers still struggle with how to fit into established groups and activities. We can also be reserved when it comes to inviting our friends and neighbors to church.

3 Our Work in the World

Our motto is “Together We Serve” and this reflects our congregation’s deep sense of purpose. We are known as an active church that is committed to making a difference—in our local community and in the broader world—in the areas of disaster relief, homelessness and hunger, and social justice.

We are also driving a conversation in Marin about climate change through our Green Chautauqua speaker series.

The culmination of our role in Marin's Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (R.E.S.T) has

left us wondering how to respond to another service project that can engage us shoulder-to-shoulder with members of the community, particularly children, youth, and families.

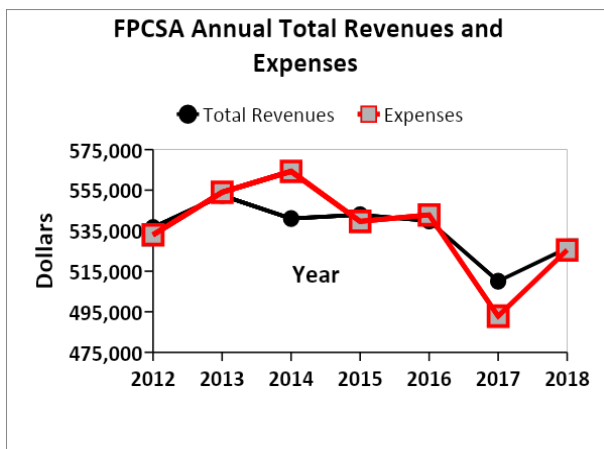
Financial Health

Operating Budget

We rely on annual revenues of approximately \$525,000 from three sources:

- Pledges and contributions (73%)
- Fees from community groups that use our facilities (26%)
- Endowment earnings (1%)

After experiencing a budget deficit in 2014, expenses were trimmed in 2015 and 2016. In 2017, our associate pastor took another call, and we eliminated that position as an additional expense-cutting strategy. As a one-pastor church, we are better positioned to balance revenues and expenses.



Annual Giving

We are blessed with a generous congregation. Our Annual Giving campaign is quite low-key, yet consistently generates the funds we need to pay our pastor and staff and run our ministries and programs. In 2017 we launched a 3-year capital campaign to raise \$400K for needed improvements to our buildings and grounds. To date, we've received pledges of \$419,000. We've chosen to pay for these improvements as funds are received, rather than borrowing against future anticipated contributions and adding debt service to our operating budget.

Use Fees

Our location and facilities are used by a number of non-profit organizations. The San Anselmo Preschool, Cedars of Marin, and other non-profits use our spaces and are important extensions of our mission. By maintaining and modernizing our facilities we can preserve excellent relationships with our tenants. We can also attract additional room users who are providing valuable services to our community.

Financial Position

The church financial position as of August 31, 2019 is summarized below. We have sufficient cash on hand to manage the monthly and annual cash flow rhythms. We have \$665,000 in endowments that could be

called upon in an emergency. We have \$307,000 in dedicated accounts, funds set aside for specifically targeted programs or for future church needs.

FPCSA Summary of Financial Position 07/31/2019	
Assets	
Union Bank Checking Account	\$215,603
Union Bank Savings Account	\$113,811
Dedicated Accounts	\$307,586
Endowments – Fidelity Investments	\$229,465
Endowments – Titus Wealth Management	\$425,914
Total Assets	\$1,292,379
Liabilities	
Dedicated Account Liabilities	(\$368,170)
Assets Minus Liabilities	\$924,209



How We Serve

Worship and Music

Sunday worship is the core of our faith practice at First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo. The 10 AM service includes choir and instrumental music, traditional and newer hymns, scripture readings, a sermon, and prayer. Communion (served on the first Sunday of the month) is open to everyone.

We have been blessed with inspiring preachers—past and present. “Listening to great sermons” was named as one of the top 3 aspects of church that are most important to our congregation in a recent survey. Our sermons can be read (or heard) on our website each week, and in this way we are reaching people who aren’t necessarily with us on Sunday morning.

Our worship style is predominantly traditional. Over the years, we have experimented with alternative formats including “At Table” services and more recently a “Family Sunday” once a month. These new formats require significant extra

effort and have earned mixed reviews; we continue to experiment with formats that are more inclusive of the unchurched in our midst and are also sustainable for the worship team.

Easter and Christmas are bright spots on our church calendar. We make a special effort to welcome members of the community who seek a return to tradition and to the holy on these special days. On Easter Sunday, we offer all singers in the congregation an opportunity to join in Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus at the end of the service; this is a beloved tradition. On Christmas Eve, we include visiting children in walk-on parts in the pageant, and the time for carols, cider, and cookies after our late service is remarkably well-attended by our neighbors.

We’re a welcoming place for children, teens, and families of all kinds. Every week in worship we “sing the children forward” for the Sermon on the Steps with these words: “You

are a part of the family!" We invite families with infants and toddlers to remain in worship, with their "wiggles and giggles," or to take advantage of our excellent nursery.

The nursery is available on Sunday morning for newborns up to kindergarten age children, starting at about 9:00. Our nursery caregivers are supervised by the Executive Director of the preschool on our campus, [San Anselmo Preschool](#).

Godly Play (Sunday School) is offered for children from kindergarten through 5th grade. Godly Play begins each Sunday at

about 10:15 following the Sermon from the Steps (our children's time in the sanctuary). Music is integral to our worship and to the life of this congregation. First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo offers a remarkable array of beautiful music each Sunday and throughout the year. Our Director of Music, Daniel Canosa, is considered one of the best conductors of his generation. He has led orchestras and choruses in Argentina, Europe, and the United States. Our sanctuary, with its amazing acoustics, welcomes a wide array of performing groups including ECHO Chamber Orchestra, Marin Baroque, the Marin Girls' Chorus and Consort Chorale.

Social Justice

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo attempts to live out God's call to bring justice to the oppressed and give bread to the hungry. We demonstrate our faith through multiple local and world ministries. The Church & Society Committee is one of the larger and most active committees in the church. It meets once a month to report, discern, interpret, debate and offer prayerful meditation with regard to what actions the church will take on a variety of mission and social justice issues. Pastor Joanne Whitt has regularly attended meetings and has thoughtfully encouraged and nurtured the committee.

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo is recognized as the originator of more social justice overtures than any other church in the Presbytery of the Redwoods. We have

sponsored overtures to General Assembly on fossil fuel divestment, Palestinian Human Rights and LGBTQIA+ ordination and marriage.

Climate Change

In the recent past, the congregation has become increasingly engaged on issues of climate change and earth and environmental justice. Responding to the call to be faithful stewards of creation, the congregation launched a lecture series known as Green Chautauqua. Guest speakers, many from the scientific community, have lectured on a variety of local and global issues aimed at healing the planet. Topics have included farming, earth friendly food choices and social action—all aimed at reducing carbon emissions. The seminars have involved

significant participation from the larger non-church community.

In 2014, session acted upon a request from the Church & Society committee to divest from fossil fuel equities. The Resources Committee has implemented an eco-friendly portfolio. In addition, we have calculated and attempted to reduce our carbon footprint in various ways including the installation of solar panels. Session has sponsored several planet-based overtures to Presbytery of the Redwoods and ultimately General Assembly.

Members of the Church & Society committee along with other congregation members have attended several demonstrations intended to increase public recognition of global warming issues including oil fracking in California. The committee has also sponsored letter writing campaigns related to environmental justice issues. For many years we supported and served as a distribution point for Full Belly Farms, a local food cooperative. We spiritually and financially supported committee member Peter Anderson in his journey to Standing Rock.

Hunger and Homelessness

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo has an enduring commitment to ending hunger in the world. For nine years until 2018 we, along with 15 other congregations, participated in the Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (R.E.S.T.) by operating a shelter and food program out of our fellowship hall, Duncan Hall. This program was initiated by Jo Gross and Royce Truex and led by Joy Snyder. Every Friday night between October and April, we fed and housed between 30 and 50 men experiencing homelessness. On an annual

basis, at least 70 members of the congregation and the broader community participated in the program. Each week, the congregation faithfully prepared the meals and the tables and then, after serving the food, joined the men for supper.

In 2018, the Rotating Shelter was replaced by a “housing first” priority, and weekly dinners are now under the umbrella of The Street Chaplaincy. Our church members continue to take an active role.

We faithfully engage in other services which are aimed at eradicating both local and world hunger. Members regularly, as an offering during worship, contribute food to a Marin Food Bank barrel that is situated in the sanctuary. The congregation generously supports the Cents Ability offering. Members regularly donate to and participate in the Pedal for Protein and Marin CROP Hunger Walk programs.

We annually sponsor a letter-writing campaign to Congress for Bread for the World. This has enjoyed strong participation by the congregation, often resulting in the writing of approximately 100 letters. Through the Church & Society Committee, First Presbyterian donates to local food related shelters including St. Vincent’s, Ritter Center and the Mill Street shelter.

We’re also committed to efforts that address local housing and related issues. We support Ross Valley Ecumenical Housing (REVH), a coalition that provides low-income housing in the church neighborhood. RVEH was born out of a study group from the Church & Society Committee. We have enjoyed a significant relationship with Ambassadors of Hope and

Opportunity, an organization that supports Marin County youth experiencing homelessness. We also financially support Canal Alliance, a non-profit organization that offers legal services, education, career programs and social services to Latino immigrants living in Marin County.

Israel-Palestine

The congregation has a significant history of work for peace and justice on Israel-Palestine issues. Under the leadership of retired SFTS faculty member, Walt Davis, twenty members of the congregation have travelled to Palestine to plant olive trees and harvest olives. Our solidarity with the Palestinian people has been lived out in other ways including hosting of seminars on the issue, the welcoming of activists from Palestine and continued support through the Keep Hope Alive Program, which provides travel scholarships for travel to Israel-Palestine. Our relationship with Palestine has inspired the Church & Society committee to sponsor several overtures to Presbytery of the Redwoods and to General Assembly aimed at the actions of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Racial Justice

The San Francisco Chronicle recently referred to San Anselmo as the whitest town in the Bay Area. Despite this demographic, the congregation has a long history of social activism on racial equality issues. In 1965, the session voted to send the then pastor, Henry Kuizenga, to Selma, Alabama to march with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. The congregation has recently taken steps to address the killings of unarmed African American men and to educate itself with

regard to racist structures in America and the world. Pastor Whitt led after-church seminars focused on white privilege, white supremacy and racial inequities in the prison system. We continue to strive in faith and love for a global community without racial prejudice. The flag at the entrance to First Presbyterian proclaims our support for Black Lives Matter and that all persons are welcome to join us on the journey.

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo has been supportive of LGBTQIA+ members in our church community and the broader world. We embrace and practice the belief that we are all children of God. We proclaim that we are all one family in Christ. In August 2019, session approved designating ourselves a More Light Church.

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo joined the Marin Organizing Committee (MOC) in 2018. MOC is a local non-profit connective organization which helps engage faith communities and other groups in joint advocacy efforts to improve the lives of those in need in Marin County.

Afghanistan

The Bare Roots program was organized in 2005 to plant trees in the war-torn Afghanistan. Every year since then, groups from our congregation have travelled to Kabul to plant trees in the city and surrounding villages. In conjunction with our Afghan partners, more than 185,000 trees have been planted. While Asma Eschen has been instrumental in continuing to lead tree-planting trips, the program is presently on hold largely because of safety concerns.

Outreach to Those in Need


Members of our congregation have regularly joined together in disaster recovery efforts. In October-November 2018, a group of 10 members, led by Lisa Cosby, travelled to Puerto Rico to join a home rebuilding project. Large contingents of the congregation have made multiple trips to Gulfport, Mississippi to provide still needed rebuilding in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The committee actively supports several global mission partners of the Presbyterian Church, one in Costa Rica and the other in Nicaragua. These missionaries/teachers have on occasion spoken to our congregation and stayed in our homes. Their lectures have been informative and have helped us connect to the world in Central America.

Anti-Torture

We have a growing awareness about torture in the American penal system. The Anti-Torture Team, a small but passionate group, is

a subcommittee of the Church & Society Committee. It is focused on both communication with prisoners and communication to the congregation concerning the conditions in the US prison system. We continue to be sobered by and enlightened on these issues through seminars, demonstrations, and fasting events.



First Presbyterian actively seeks the opportunity to grow and show God's love beyond the walls of the church and to engage in the world in a faithful way.

Education

Continuing education of officers and members is a core part of church life. The primary source of continuing education is the Sunday Seminar although there are multiple other opportunities including:

Sunday School

The Godly Play curriculum has been used for several years. It is taught by our Director of

Family Ministries, Patrick O'Connor, a seminary student and experienced children's educator. Sunday school is held every Sunday during the school year and average attendance is between 2 and 6 children.

Sunday Seminars

Following worship and coffee hour, we frequently have a one-hour educational

program. Speakers include both invited guests and church members. In 2018-19, Sunday Seminars have featured a range of topics:

- Every third Sunday is devoted to programs, meetings and discussions on climate change issues. Doug Olds presented his findings of an energy audit of the church. Royce Truex, Peter Anderson and Doug Olds held a response to the Dahr Jamail talk.
- Lisa Della Valle and Anne Poore (members) hosted an art show titled *Love without Borders*, featuring work by children in refugee camps.
- Jordan Decker, a trans man, spoke about the long recovery from surgery and his Marin welcome.
- Alice Graham and Jillian Robinson (members) hosted mission sales to benefit Pedal for Protein.
- Asma Eschen (member) talked about the Bare Roots Project in Afghanistan.
- Ashley Reid spoke about Sanctuary Congregations.
- Lisa Ling spoke about drones and drone warfare.
- Erica Heath (member) organized speakers to review the state ballot propositions.
- Rachel Ginis spoke about Lilypad homes, an effort to encourage second units locally.
- Pat Langley spoke about the future of the R.E.S.T program.
- David Conant (member) spoke about "Final Requests," a right to die program implementing state law.

- Joanne Whitt (pastor) showed the movie "13th" over 3 weeks with discussion each week.
- Kim Thompkins spoke about the Community Land Trust Alliance of Marin (CLAM).
- Margaret Melsh and Lisa Cosby (members) reported on the church's disaster plan.
- Erica Heath (member) gave a demonstration of "go bags" right after the Paradise fire.
- Lisa Cosby (member) and the team gave a report about their post-hurricane trip to Anasco, Puerto Rico.

Transition Group

This group is dedicated to helping one another through life's transitions. The group reads and reflects on books on a variety of topics from self-help (Brené Brown) to exploratory (The Artist's Way) to educational about key social topics (Waking up White). Each reading assignment is accompanied by a pastor-selected Biblical verse for discussion. The group has been meeting once a week since 2008.

Book Group

This group, which has met for decades, is quite eclectic in its tastes. Although the works chosen to read and discuss are primarily fiction or biography, the range is broad. *Zealot*, *The Woman Who Broke Codes*, and *The Burglary* are among recent selections.

Women's Retreat

Each year near the first of May, a women's retreat is held in the Ralston White Retreat

Center in Mill Valley. It begins on late Friday afternoon and concludes with dinner on Saturday. Between 30 and 50 women typically attend. Each year it is facilitated by a woman, often a pastor from the area.

New Member Process

At least once a year, our pastor has led a 3-stage series for potential new members to get to know more about the congregation, the Presbyterian Church, and each other. Stage 1 is a tour of the church campus, with some history. Stage 2 is "Presbyterian 101," covering Presbyterian history, polity and theology. Anyone may participate in Stages 1 and 2. Stage 3, the New Member Dinner, is only for those who have made a commitment to become members of the church. The Saturday evening before the new members join the church, they share dinner at the pastor's home, and each person shares his or her life story in (approximately) seven

minutes. The group is received into membership by session the following morning before worship, and is then welcomed by the congregation during worship.

Officer Training

Training for church officers is usually conducted as an annual one-day retreat and often covers topics pertaining to church management and function. Attended by elders and deacons, the retreat agenda includes worship, study and reflection, discussion, shared meals and fellowship.

Following several years of study of racial issues, elders take turns at monthly session meetings to give reports on related books, drawing from authors ranging from James Baldwin to Debby Irving to Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Children & Families

Generations of members have long held the view that ministry at every age is the key to a strong community and a vibrant church life. Establishing engaging programs and hiring talented and personable staff are instrumental components to making that happen. The church is working hard to make sure that families, parents and children feel there is a place, a program and a person to connect with at First Pres.



“Play is our brain’s favorite way of learning.”

Diane Ackerman, author and poet

Infants & Toddlers

Come in, come in and sit down! You are a part of the family.

Every week in worship we “sing the children forward” by name for the Sermon on the Steps with these words: “You are a part of the family!” We welcome families with infants and toddlers to remain in worship, with their “wiggles and giggles,” or to take advantage of our excellent nursery.

The nursery is available on Sunday morning for newborns up to kindergarten age children, starting at about 9:00. Our nursery caregivers are supervised by Elizabeth McGrady, Executive Director of the preschool on our campus, San Anselmo Preschool.

K-5th Grade

Each Sunday children from kindergarten through fifth grade are invited to Godly Play at about 10:15, following the Sermon from the Steps (our children’s time in the sanctuary). In the careful telling of stories from the Bible or about the Christian calendar and church sacraments, and engagement of wondering questions, adults help children develop a language to express what they already know about God. In the process, adults learn something, too.

From the Godly Play perspective, children have an innate sense of the presence of God. The Godly Play approach helps them to explore their faith through story, to gain religious language and to enhance their spiritual experience through wonder and play. Based on Montessori principles and developed using a spiral curriculum, the Godly Play method serves children through early,

middle and late childhood and beyond. Patrick O’Connor, the Director of Family Ministries, teaches this weekly class during the regular school year.

Youth

Our youth come together in fellowship and community with one another. They share in asking questions and exploring faith in new ways. They also get together for fun via game nights, trips to House of Air, and more.

In years past, the youth group prepared and served meals to our guests through the REST Shelter. They gleaned various crops in Mill Valley at Green Gulch, and the harvest was then distributed to the local food banks. They have helped build homes in Mexico and Gulfport, Louisiana. They have served at the older adults’ Valentine’s Tea and spent a few Saturday mornings helping spiff up the church campus. The heart of our youth ministry is providing opportunities to practice love for neighbor, self, the earth and God through service.

Since the youth group does not currently have a weekly or set schedule for meeting, the coordination of activities has been organized most recently by an intern and two high school students. Some leadership opportunities in the recent past have seen the youth leading worship services like the Christmas Eve pageant. FPCSA recently hired Patrick O’Connor to become the new Director of Family Ministries, and he has great ideas for this vital group. That vision is grounded in Christian education and years of experience. We are excited to see the direction he is taking.

Older Adults

The Older Adult Ministry serves our aging adult population. The program is led by Director of Older Adult Ministries Martha Spears. Almost 30% of our church members are over the age of 70.

A significant portion of our older adults have mobility or health issues which, in many cases, limit or preclude their participation in the life of the church. A core role of the Director of Older Adult Ministries is to monitor this older population and then coordinate with the pastor and deacons to identify persons in need of pastoral care. Martha regularly communicates with older congregants and their families at worship and through phone calls, e-mails and visits.

Martha also organizes several fellowship events throughout the year aimed at older adults. These include a Valentine's Tea, Christmas Luncheon and the "Lunch Bunch," a group which meets for lunch on the second and fourth Friday of each month.



Memorial Garden

Established in 1998 through the leadership of Robin and Merritt Robinson and Patricia and Chuck Swensen, the Memorial Garden is a columbarium where ashes of deceased are interred. It is a place of remembrance and celebration. It is a welcoming retreat shaded by a magnificent coast redwood tree, and a place of quiet reflection. The Director of Older Adult Ministries has some responsibilities related to the Memorial Garden, including ordering plaques. The garden is maintained by several volunteers.

Small Groups

Small groups are a wellspring of our life as a community and are formed around shared interests. All provide opportunities to work, play, learn, and grow in Christian faith. Small groups are organized by members and currently serve a range of interests and needs.

Book Group

This group meets weekly from September to mid-June. They take on challenging popular books, reading and discussing them chapter by chapter.

Life Stories Writing Group

In this group, members take turns sharing stories they write with one another. The forum is designed to encourage memoirs or other forms of written expression: poetry, essays, fiction, or whatever may interest participants.

Dinner Parties

Dinner parties bring together multiple groups of 8-12 people for a potluck meal at someone's home. Everyone is invited to participate, including families with children. Dinner parties take place four times during the year and each time the participant list is shuffled.

Closely Knit Group

Participants say this is a great place to make new friends as they chat and knit, knowing that what they produce will bring warmth, cheer and love to someone who needs it. Most of the knitting is done at home but the group enjoys occasional get-togethers. Formed in 2009, the group has donated preemie caps to a local hospital, made prayer shawls as gifts of comfort and love and provided caps and scarves at Christmas for our winter shelter guests.

Fitness Group

Celebrating its 26th year, the Fitness Group meets for fellowship and exercise on Mondays in Duncan Hall. The hour-long class consists of a series of non-impact stretch and tone movements, a short free weight session,

modified yoga postures for balance, mat Pilates and a simple ballet barre.

Centering Prayer

Centering prayer is a way of being in God's presence in wordless silence, using a technique to avoid giving attention to the thoughts that inevitably come up during silence. The group meets every Thursday for 30-45 minutes, with prayer using 20 minutes of that time.

Women's Breakfast

Every second Saturday, women gather over a "potluck light" breakfast, coffee and tea. The program is friendship and one woman's life story.

Theatre Outings

These events offer the opportunity to enjoy live theatre as a group and discuss the experience. Outings are planned for each production of the Ross Valley Players' September - August season, which takes place in "The Barn Theatre" at the Marin Art and Garden Center. The plays are diverse in their themes and settings but the standards are consistently high.

Men's Group

This group offers men an opportunity to share their life experiences and practice listening and empathy skills. More often than not, their stories and conversation fill the 90 minute-session. On occasion, a reading guides the discussion.

Community Partnerships

Marin Organizing Committee

In 2018, First Presbyterian joined the [Marin Organizing Committee](#) (MOC), a coalition founded in 2009. Member organizations work together to develop local advocacy agendas by engaging in conversation about the issues affecting our families, neighborhoods and communities.

MOC is currently working on multiple issues, including protections for renters in Marin, funding for a housing-focused shelter, issues around educational equity and fair treatment for immigrants. Past issues have included access to health care and affordable housing.

San Francisco Theological Seminary

In 1892, the San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) moved from San Francisco to San Anselmo on land donated by A.W. Foster with the stipulation that if the Seminary board ceased to maintain a Presbyterian theological seminary on the site, the 15 acres would revert to Foster or his heirs. FPCSA was originally established as Seminary Presbyterian to serve the needs of the seminary community, with the first worship services held at Montgomery Chapel in 1897. FPCSA has maintained a close link with SFTS, with students, faculty and administration. Many FPCSA interns have been students of SFTS. The recent merger of SFTS and the University of the Redlands will unfold over time.

Homeless Chaplaincy

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo was an active participant in the formation of the Rotating Emergency Shelter Team program which ended in 2018 after nine years of ministry. FPCSA now participates in The Street Chaplaincy dinner program.

San Anselmo Preschool

A church-sponsored preschool began in 1968 to care primarily for the children of seminary students.

Royce Truex was instrumental in designing the administrative structure of the school and establishing a policy of religious diversity on the board and among the children who attend. He urged setting up a defined church/pre-school relationship and developing bylaws which established that the board of the school be composed of the school administrator, parents, and a representative of session with regular liaison between the church staff and session. The Pre-school and First Presbyterian share the same non-profit tax identification number.

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

Every Thanksgiving eve, we worship jointly with St. Anselm's Catholic Church, St. John's Episcopal Church and St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church. Each year the site and leadership responsibilities rotate among the churches. We believe this tradition extends back as far as 100 years.

Groups Using our Spaces

Many non-profits and community groups use our classrooms and spaces to provide valuable services to the Marin community.

These include:

- Cedars of Marin
- 10,000 Victories (martial arts)
- Music Together of Marin
- Marin Baroque
- ECHO Orchestra
- Marin Girls Chorus
- Marin Community Music
- 12-step recovery groups (8)
- Marin Barbershop Chorus
- Marin Horse Council
- Tai Chi classes
- Qigong
- San Francisco Theological Seminary
- Consort Chorale
- Music lessons by individuals
- Lovely Lady Products (rents our kitchen to make a line of skin care products)

Church Leadership & Management

Our church is blessed with strong pastoral and program leadership, which consists of both paid staff and lay leaders with specific professional expertise.

Current Staff

The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt	Pastor and Head of Staff (retiring October, 2019)
Daniel Canosa	Director of Music
Martha Spears	Director of Older Adult Ministries
Patrick O'Connor	Director of Family Ministries
Elizabeth McGrady	Executive Director, San Anselmo Preschool
Natsuko Murayama	Organist
Laurie Buntain	Church Business Manager
Joanna Magee	Office Administrator
Tom Lannert	Custodian
Audrey Mahler	Sunday Sexton

Session

A 15-member session meets monthly, and each member of session is an active member of a Committee. Session members also meet once a year for planning and learning. Elders are elected to serve on session for three-year terms, with a limit of two consecutive terms (after a one-year hiatus, elders may actively serve on session again).

Deacons

Deacons are elected by the congregation to a three-year term of service on the Board of Deacons. Deacons serve the church in many ways. They offer up their prayers to members and friends in need (often accompanied by cards when appropriate) for various circumstances. They provide meals in times of need or crisis and deliver flowers to shut-ins and to those recovering from illness or surgery. They provide rides to church and to weekday appointments for those unable to drive. The deacons also host the reception following a memorial service.

Committees and Teams

Much of the work of the church is performed through committees and teams of volunteers. Our current committee structure is as follows:

EDUCATION	CONNECTIONS	CHURCH & SOCIETY	WORSHIP	RESOURCES
Encouragement of growth in knowledge and understanding that lead to enrichment of one's faith.	Building and strengthening our church community; creating opportunities to engage all members and friends in the life of this congregation.	Discussion of new and ongoing social justice issues, distributing mission and special offering funds, advocacy for teams.	Anything to do with worship and special services that require programs, equipment and people to make them happen.	Stewardship of the church's material and financial resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & Family Team • Youth Team • Adult Education Team • Sunday Seminars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Welcome Team • New Members Team • Congregation Engagement Team • Creating Connections Team • Older Adults • Women's Retreat • Small Groups • Dinner Parties • Fellowship Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puerto Rico Relief Team • Keep Hope Alive Team • Climate Action Team • Alternative Christmas Team • MOC Team • Green Chautauqua • Anti-Torture Team • Racial Justice Team • Hunger & Homelessness Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship Services • Music • Sacraments • Staffing • Sanctuary Decor & Liturgical Art • Ushers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Investment Team • Annual budget • Buildings and grounds • Maintenance • Stewardship • Disaster Planning Team

Committees not listed above: The **Nominating Committee** is a committee of the congregation elected for a one-year term to nominate elder and deacon candidates as well as candidates for the following year's Nominating Committee. The **Personnel Committee** is a committee of session and oversees all matters related to church employees.

Administrative Initiatives

We are currently identifying and developing ways to address additional administrative needs, which include tenant outreach and management, upgrading member management software to the cloud, creating a cloud-based information portal for church leadership (staff, officers, and committees), online giving and congregation-wide communications.



What We Seek to Become

Our Challenges and Strategic Goals

On the surface, we are a church with an aging membership, serving a Marin County community that doesn't particularly value participation in organized religion. Look a little more closely and you'll see a church that, despite these odds, is energized and hopeful.

Throughout our work of discernment, we've identified the ways we must respond to the challenges we face.

Challenge 1: How do we remain relevant to those who seek to find meaning in a rapidly changing world, while maintaining the integrity of Jesus' teachings and our church traditions?

Marin County is ground zero for the "spiritual but not religious." Spirit Rock, Green Gulch Zen Center, yoga studios, meditation centers, social activism and the beauty of the outdoors provide ample space to seek spiritual sustenance and a sense of purpose.

We believe our church provides that sense of purpose and more—we also provide a sense of meaning that is rooted in Christian faith. We believe it is more important to remain relevant to these longings than to tally up our new member count year over year.

We remain relevant when we:

Create and nurture community. By connecting with others, we grow in faith and life. We strive to create a community where all are valued, where everyone has a role, and where our joys and sufferings are shared. We seek an orchestration of our energies where everyone can be involved and integrated into the life of the community, according to their gifts, as they feel called. We look for ways to actively engage our community beyond Sunday morning, because we recognize that church can happen any time.

Demonstrate authenticity. We believe we are called to live out our faith in our relationships in the world. We are authentic when we love broadly and seek the fullness of life for all people, wherever they are. We believe that Jesus points us to a way of life and faith centered in the love of God—not in right doctrines or beliefs.

Cultivate inclusion. All of us, believing and doubting, are companions on the journey, together leaning into our faith as we confront complex issues of compassion, justice, faith, and love. We believe that each voice has its own beauty, and all are welcomed and known without “us” and “them” labels.

Access Biblical teachings. In our sermons, group work, and gatherings, we don’t assume familiarity with the Bible. We explore what Biblical teachings meant when written, and what they mean now. In our worship and service, we tackle issues that affect our world today, and listen for what God is trying to tell us. As we say each Sunday in worship, “we celebrate the living Word, Christ among us.”

Create opportunities for youth and families. We need to offer kids a safe and loving place where they can be accepted for

who they are, get involved in service, and have fun.

Challenge 2: How can we reimagine the role our church can play in serving, embracing, and partnering with the Marin County community to do God’s work in the world?

We have experienced a gradual unfolding, from decade to decade, of congregational patterns of worship and education, mission and service, fellowship and nurture. We have a unique opportunity to evolve once again to meet the needs of today’s Marin. To serve a community that is looking for a new type of church experience—where it’s less about believing in and more about following Jesus.

We believe that Jesus points us to a way of life and faith centered in the love of God. He called this “the kingdom of God,” a kingdom not defined by a list of unchanging beliefs, but by the dynamic pursuit of love. Therefore, we believe that church should be more of a “school of love,” and less about right doctrines or beliefs.

Our starting place is seeking to love one another. We strive to be a welcoming and hospitable community where all people are welcome. We value the sacredness of life. We honor diversity. We listen for God’s call. We challenge and nurture each person’s journey toward the justice of Christ, the reconciliation of the Spirit and the wholeness of God. This is how we live our faith in the world.

We can be that connectional “hub” for God’s work when we:

Invite more people into meaningful dialogue. Programs such as Green Chautauqua show us how we might create and guide conversations about the world we live in and how to respond with deeper understanding and hope.

Listen for unmet needs. Our participation in the Marin Organizing Committee represents a step we have taken to partner with others in the community to serve those in need and support the marginalized. We can do more.

Create opportunities to serve. We’ve learned through our participation in R.E.S.T. that our neighbors want to work with us to make our community better, stronger, and healthier.

Strengthen community connections. The Mission Study Team met with community leaders to ask them how our church might be a resource to the community. Over and over, we heard the need for more ways to connect neighbors with each other and to strengthen a sense of community. Lectures, music, movie nights, game nights, classes, hikes are all ways our church can be more connectional and inclusive—we don’t have to be “churchy” to be a church.

Identify ourselves in the community. We all come from many rich backgrounds and faith traditions, as do our friends and neighbors. Perhaps we respect difference so much that we pause when saying where we worship. We need to learn to say out loud, “I am a part of First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo.” Particularly when we are partnering with others in projects or engaged in social justice work.

Make better use of our facilities. Through modernization of our building and grounds, we can provide much needed space for community partners, and also support more types of events, performances, and concerts for the larger Marin community.

Challenge 3: How will things get done at church, when so many of us have less time for volunteering, and a growing number of church jobs require advanced skills?

Like most churches, we rely on volunteers to serve as elders and deacons, care for our buildings and grounds, facilitate group gatherings, welcome newcomers on Sunday mornings, teach Sunday School, plan educational programs -- and hundreds of other jobs, big and small. Yet in an era of two-income families and over-extended lives, volunteering is on the decline, while paying for personal services is on the rise. It’s natural for busy Marin families to pay people to housesit, babysit, walk dogs, water gardens, do yard work, shop or run errands.

We also recognize that being a church in the 21st century calls for more advanced skills. This includes projects such as our website, graphic design, signage, audio/visual technologies, social media, podcasting, information technology, online giving, solar panel installation, building renovations, and more.

We will be successful in providing our congregation and the Marin community with

opportunities to worship, connect and serve in clean and well-kept facilities when we:

Adopt new models of volunteering. Fewer people want to join committees, more want to support projects that have clear instructions with a start and an end. We want to tap into expertise and technologies for managing volunteers so they feel directed and supported while at the same time experience a sense of mutual ownership.

Leverage paid professionals. It can take too long for a willing volunteer to learn how to implement Google Suites, install a new sound board, build a podcasting system, or put solar panels on the roof. We need to be better stewards of our members' time and talents and also faster in keeping up with new tools and technologies. For a church that has historically rolled up its sleeves to save money, this will require a significant shift in the way we plan and budget.

Invest in our future. As we complete the capital campaign-funded projects, we will see the impact of these improvements on our ability to serve—more visitors, better relationships with our room users, more non-profit groups using our facilities, more concertgoers and lecture audiences.

Challenge 4: How can the church assist a pastor with the high cost of housing in Marin County?

We anticipate the Pastor Nominating Committee will want to do a nationwide search for the pastor. The median house price in the U.S. is \$229,000. The median house price in Marin County is \$1,117,400. The price

in San Anselmo is the same as Marin County. Housing prices drop a bit as you go north of San Anselmo. The median housing price in Novato, about 20 minutes north, is \$826,000.

Obviously the cost of housing may be an impediment to many potential pastor candidates unless they already live in a very high cost housing area. We have been fortunate that the last two pastors we called already had housing in the San Francisco area, so the cost of housing was not an impediment for them to accept the call to be our pastor. But we cannot assume this will happen in the future. Therefore, the church is exploring options to assist potential pastor candidates with housing costs if needed.

Equity Sharing between Church and Pastor.

Over the next year our Resources Committee will explore equity sharing agreements between the church and a pastor to determine if this is a viable option. The Synod of the Pacific can help churches participate in housing equity sharing arrangements with their pastors. Their goal is to help a congregation call a pastor who may otherwise not be able to accept the call due to the cost of housing in the area. The Synod also aims to help the church build equity in its local housing market, an investment that will always keep pace with future pastors' housing needs.

The Synod of the Pacific does not enter into equity sharing agreements with pastors, but rather loans money to congregations so they may participate in such agreements. To whatever degree the church provides funds for the purchase of the property, the church becomes the owner of that percentage of the property. When the pastor sells the property or leaves the church, the church will receive

that percentage of the selling price, less expenses.

Our church may qualify for a Synod loan with a below market interest rate in order to help fund an equity sharing agreement.

Opportunities for Leadership

Through the Mission Study process we have characterized who we are, identified our strengths, and discerned some of the challenges we face. Our next pastor will be one who can build upon these strengths and collaborate with us to grow into the next decade with a spirit of awareness, focus, and joy. We seek a pastor who will:

Build upon and embrace our core values

The core values of the congregation include:

- Being a warm, welcoming, accepting, and inclusive community where all are welcome regardless of where they are on their faith journey
- Creating worship that is alive, compelling, and challenging with wonderful music
- Involving ourselves actively in many social justice issues with a strong emphasis on “walking the talk”
- Providing educational and social opportunities for large and small groups to engage

We seek a pastor who can embrace these core values and use them as a foundation for future growth.

Help us to be relevant and authentic in the future

There are numerous worthy spiritual, educational, and non-profit organizations that provide a sense of community similar to a church. But as a Presbyterian Church community we seek to be authentic to the good news of the Gospel and the polity of our denomination. We are especially aware that we must be constantly reforming to be relevant and authentic in today's work.

We seek a pastor who can walk the fine line of making our congregation relevant to the social challenges of the next decade, while remaining authentic in our faith and witness to the world.

Help us serve and partner with the larger Marin Community to do God's work in the world

The three buildings on our church campus are already heavily used and host many non-profit organizations on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Our congregation's emphasis on social justice has resulted in numerous connections to groups working on many human rights and environmental issues. We have a unique opportunity to do more within our town and county to partner with other groups doing God's work in the world, even though they are secular and not faith-based organizations.

We seek a pastor who can help us find new avenues for partnering with other organizations to continually grow as a beacon of light to the community.

Help us find new ways to manage church activities and encourage volunteerism

The Presbyterian Church has a bottoms up democratic organization that presumes many tasks of governing and maintaining the buildings and grounds of a church are done by volunteers. This model is being challenged by an aging population, two-parent working families, and volunteers who are willing to invest time in short-term projects but avoid long-term commitments.

We seek a pastor who can help us discern new models for church management and volunteerism in the future.

In highlighting the four opportunities above, the phrase "help us" has been used rather than the phrase "lead us." This is because we believe the responsibility to provide church leadership does not rest solely with the pastor. Rather it is the collaboration of the pastor with the session, deacons, staff, committees, and individuals that will help us meet our challenges and lead us to new discoveries as we live into what God is calling us to do.



Appendix

Community Demographics

San Anselmo is one of the “gems” in a string of picturesque communities along the Sir Francis Drake Boulevard corridor, which runs from east to west through Central Marin County. San Anselmo is located about 20 miles north of San Francisco, nestled at the base of Mt. Tamalpais, which is playground to many avid hikers and mountain biking enthusiasts.

San Anselmo is home for many double-income professionals, and the upward pressure on home prices has created a certain “gentrification” of what was once a middle class community. San Anselmo numbers approximately 12,500 residents, with a 2016 median income of \$ 116,867. Only about 2.96% of residents are below the poverty line. (Source: [DataUSA.io](https://datausa.io)). Forty-seven percent of households have children under 18 living with them. (Source: [Areavibes.com](https://areavibes.com))

Marin County

Marin County has the highest per capita income of any county in the United States. This is driven in particular by the expensive enclaves of Belvedere, Kentfield, Larkspur, Ross, Tiburon, Mill Valley, Sausalito, Corte Madera, and San Anselmo. Even the traditionally middle class towns of Fairfax, Novato and San Rafael (where per capita incomes typically paralleled the California state average as late as 1985) also have experienced upward pressure on real estate values, due in part to their proximity to the “prestige” address areas. The county is renowned for its resistance to urban sprawl and its preservation of open space, which protects the beauty and “small town feel” of Marin but also contributes to upward impact on housing prices by limiting the availability of new home construction.

Marin enjoys one of the most beautiful settings in California, surrounded by woodlands, bays, and beaches. The vast majority of Marin residents (86%) are white, and incomes tend to be quite high. The population which is not white includes a variety of multi-cultural communities, in particular the Canal area of San Rafael (Hispanic/Latino) and Marin City (East Asian, Hispanic, African-American).

Politically, Marin County has become largely Democratic in recent decades, with the third largest Democratic vote of all California counties in the 2008 Presidential election. Culturally, Marin has often been stereotyped as a liberal haven, as exemplified by former U.S. President George W. Bush denouncing convicted American terrorist John Walker Lindh as a “misguided Marin County hot-tubber.”

Religion in Marin

In early 2000, the Institute for Jewish and Community Research of San Francisco conducted a telephone survey, resulting in 604 completed interviews, and published the findings in a 2002 study called *Religious & Spiritual Change in America: The Experience of Marin County, California*. While 82% of survey respondents said they are spiritual, only 22% say they are religious (practicing a faith on an institutionally led path, vs. spirituality, which is more about an internal, personal journey that may borrow from many faith traditions).

Presbyterians in Marin

Of the 22% of the people in Marin County who say they are religious, meaning they affiliate with a religion, 1.44% are Presbyterian. This

compares to 1.33% of the United States as a whole.

Like many “mainline” traditional religions in the United States, the Presbyterian Church is losing members. According to the 2008 PCUSA report *The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at 25: A Statistical Look at Denominational Change*, we’ve seen a net loss of almost 1 million members between 1983 and 2008, with much of that decline occurring between 2003 and 2008. Our synod, the Synod of the Pacific represented a 5% share of total PCUSA membership in 1998, and a slightly higher share in 2008, indicating that the loss of Presbyterians in Marin is no greater (in fact, slightly less) than that experienced across the United States as a whole.

First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo

For the most part, our membership reflects the demographics of our communities. Our members are mostly white and are largely well educated professionals, although we are a welcome home to several residents of Cedars, a nearby home for the developmentally disabled, and we have members from all walks of life and socio-economic status. Our close proximity to the Seminary brings a number of noted theologians as well as students to our worship services each Sunday.

Demographic Trends and Impact on FPCSA over the Next Five Years

Our community will age slightly over the next five years but in general, our church worships, works, and serves in a community that is demographically stable.

Based on data obtained through the MissionInsite service, an online databank made available through the Redwoods Presbytery, the following numbers and trends summarize the community within a 13-mile radius of our church.

- **Household and Family Income Trends:**

In our radius, average household income in 2016 was \$126,209 and is projected to grow by 8.18%% to \$136,527 in 2021.

- **Population and Household Trends:**

Rapid growth of the 1990s is slowing, with 1% growth projected over five years.

Number of households and population per household is steady, indicating slowing birth rates.

Family households are not growing as fast as the population, in fact declining slightly, suggesting that growth is coming from non-family adult households (vs additional children)

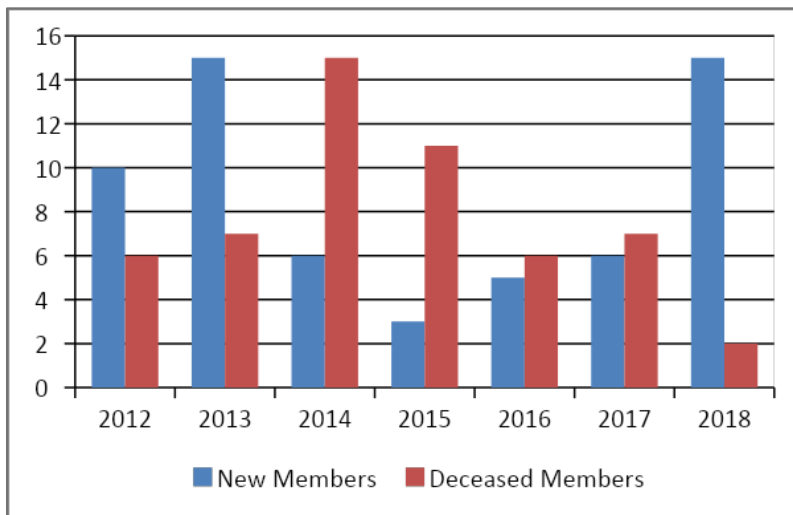
- **Age Trends:** The overall US population is aging, as Baby Boomers progress through each phase of life, coupled with a decline in live births. In our 13-mile radius, the average age will be 42 in 2021, slightly older than CA average age of 37.

- **School Age Trends:** Enrollment is expected to be stable over the next five years due to a combination of factors: lower birth rates, parents delaying decisions to have children, and the high cost of housing which makes Marin County less affordable for young families.

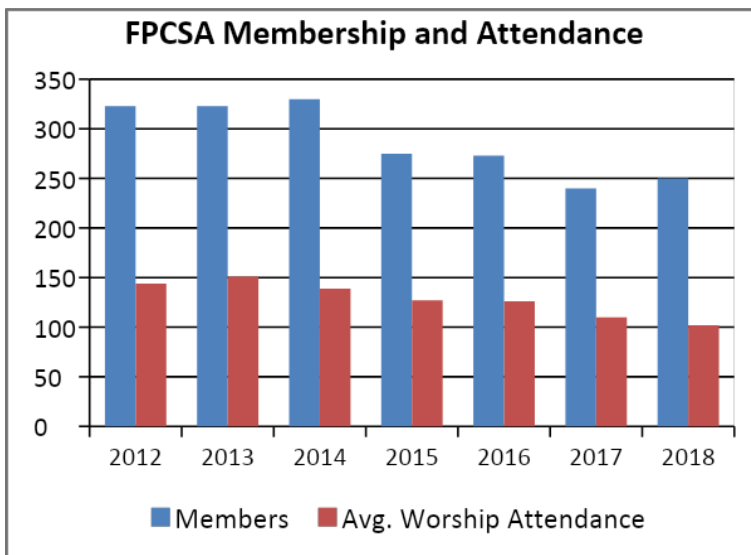
Membership Trends

Membership changes by year 2012-2018

- An average of 9 new members per year have joined the church.
- An average of 8 members per year have died.
- 15 members joined the church in 2018.



Church Attendance by year, 2012-2018



History

The Mission Study Team is deeply grateful for the work of Walt Davis in documenting our church's history through interviews, meeting notes, sermon archives, and other written materials.

We have been shaped over the past two decades since the 1997 publication of our church centennial, *"Our Past: A Window to the Future"* by changes in the congregation and in the world.

Gradually, we have evolved our self-understanding and the public perception of who we are. We have come to expect that the Way of Jesus be articulated in worship and in actions in modern, everyday language that believers and unbelievers, and everyone in between can understand and apply to daily life here and now.

Where we are today makes sense considering the pivotal events that brought us here.

August 2000

The Rev. Andy Rausch is installed as Associate Pastor for Youth, Children, and Their Parents. Andy develops an active youth group, a Sunday School for children, and a youth bell choir.

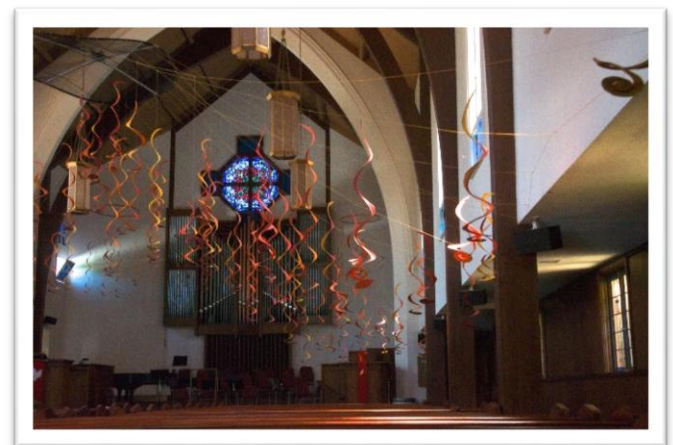
September-October 2001

Our session endorses Katie Morrison, an openly gay seminary graduate, for ordination. By a vote of 90 to 37, the Presbytery of the Redwoods approves Katie for ordination to a national staff position with More Light Presbyterians. On behalf of the presbytery, our pastor Chandler Stokes administers the

ordination questions to Katie Morrison, and the presbytery ordains her. Katie's ordination becomes a cause célèbre for activist Presbyterians who regarded homosexual behavior to be sinful. Members of presbytery and others in the PCUSA bring charges against Katie, the Rev. Mary Gillespie (Moderator of Presbytery), Katie's former pastor, the Rev. Chandler Stokes, and others. In the end, there is no trial. On March 3, 2003 the General Assembly PJC upholds Katie's ordination because no one had asked Katie if she was celibate during the September 2001 Presbytery examination. Katie's ordination marks a turning point for our congregation. It is the first time in several decades that our session takes a strong stand for justice on such a divisive issue in society and the churches.

2003

Virginia Thibeaux installs the first of many creative, seasonal liturgical art installations in the sanctuary.



May 2003

After 8.5 years as Pastor/Head of Staff, Chandler Stokes accepts a call to First Presbyterian Church of Oakland.

September 2003

Jack Shriver is installed as Interim Minister.

December 2003

At the suggestion of the Mission Study Team, the session adopts the Six Great Ends of the Church as its mission statement.

June 2004

The General Assembly approves a resolution on selective divestment from companies contributing to the violent occupation of Palestine by the state of Israel. The session requests Walt Davis to do a 5-week study of the Israel/Palestine situation, a study that examines the wide spectrum of conflicting narratives.

February-December 2003

Conflict and conflict resolution. In February 2003 the U.S. invaded Iraq, using the pretext of eradicating its weapons of mass destruction. Our interim pastor, Jack Shriver, criticizes the apparent deception, using sermons and prayers to call our government to account. Our associate pastor, Andy Rausch supports the invasion of Iraq and expresses that support in a sermon and in conversations with like-minded members. The conflict comes to a head when a church member sends a series of emails to a select group of members harshly criticizing Jack Shriver for raising political issues in sermons. Jack responds by organizing a retreat for

elders and deacons. Redwoods Presbytery Interim Executive Joan Runyeon and SFTS Counseling Center Director Dr. Sandra Brown lead the retreat on "How we can have in-depth discussions about topics on which we disagree deeply and yet still love one another as sisters and brothers in Christ." Associate Pastor Andy Rausch does not attend.

Feb 2005

Joanne Whitt is installed as the congregation's first woman Pastor and Head of Staff.

April 2005

The Church & Society Committee submits the "Report of 5-week study of Justice and Peace in Israel/Palestine: The Question of Selective Divestment" to session, along with Elder Ash Wood's Addendum. The session takes no action on selective divestment.

2005

The Bare Roots Program in Afghanistan starts under the leadership of Asma Eschen and Ash Wood as a partnership between FPCSA and Afghans 4 Tomorrow. Annual trips to Afghanistan are organized from 2005 to 2012. Asma continues returning to Afghanistan periodically until 2019. To date the Bare Roots Program has planted over 185,000 trees in partnership with Afghan workers and villagers in the Kabul area.

The term "global stewardship" causes considerable conflict when Associate Pastor Andy Rausch becomes the spokesperson for "the conservatives" in the congregation. In March, Pastor Joanne Whitt leads the annual officers' retreat on "Speaking the Truth in

Love” and looking “for ways of discussing difficult or controversial matters.”

October 2005

We begin holding a service for wholeness and healing on the first Wednesday of every month, including communion, community prayers and anointing with oil. The service continues under several iterations through February 2016.

In 2006, Joan and Carl Basore begin leading a series of annual and sometimes semi-annual trips to the Gulf Coast to rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In 2010 Lisa Cosby takes over as director of this ongoing mission project. Over the next 8 years, there were 15 trips with more than 150 members involved.

November 2005

A Mission Discernment group led by Elder Royce Truex begins meeting every two weeks from November 6, 2005 until January 23, 2007. The purpose is to select projects that merit our investment of labor and the designated mission funds from the 2001-03 capital campaign. The group met for more than a year and selected Global Stewardship as our “umbrella” mission focus, with a first project to focus on rebuilding along the Gulf Coast after 2005 hurricane Katrina.

2008

Our website is updated and moved to the Pair.com server using the services of Paul Masquelier (MasquelierOnline.com). This website replaced the original website hosted and created by Matt Thompson in 1998, then

moved to the church server with the help of Jim Sharpe in 2001.

February 2008

First Keep Hope Alive olive tree planting trip to Israel-Palestine: 22 people from Bay Area churches, 14 of whom are members of FPCSA, are led on this two-week trip by the Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel, former Moderator of the PCUSA, Walt Davis, and Herman Waetjen. Our in-country hosts and guides are the long-time PCUSA regional mission partners, namely, the YMCA of Jerusalem and the YWCA of Palestine (jai-pal.org). In October 2009, Dave Jones and Phil Kazan lead an olive harvest trip from our congregation.

As a result of these trips Libby and Walt Davis, Tom McAfee, Dave Jones, Marita Mayer, and Phyllis and Dick Schlobohm join the IPMN Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the PCUSA and our congregation becomes the fiscal agent for two annual KHA mission trips, one in February to plant olive trees and one in October to harvest olives. From 2009 to 2018, IPMN publishes four study guides for Protestant congregations on the search for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel. During the next few years our congregation hosts numerous well-known national and international speakers on I/P.

Andy Rausch accepts a call in Salinas, and the Rev. Kevin Buchanan is called as Interim Associate Pastor.

2008-2018

Our session sends ten overtures to the Presbytery of the Redwoods, eight of which are approved and forwarded to the GA. These include two on gay ordination and

marriage, three on Israel-Palestine, two on fossil fuels, and one on Madagascar.

2009

In July, in response to the recession and in support of those who have lost their jobs, the Career Transition Support Group begins meeting very week, moderated by Pastor Whitt. It evolves into the Transition Support Group, a group that practices confidentiality, shares concerns, and studies scripture and books, and meets every Wednesday morning.

The congregation observes the first "Together We Serve Sunday." The congregation is commissioned to go out and participate in a number of pre-arranged service projects, and to return for a celebratory dinner. This practice continues for four years, 2009-2012.

Participation in the R.E.S.T. program at FPCSA is initiated by Jo Gross and Royce Truex and then directed by Joy Snyder from 2009 through 2018. It provides meals and shelter for 40-50 men experiencing homelessness on Friday and Saturday nights during the rainy season. REST provides a way for our congregation as a whole, not just those who could afford international or cross-country travel, to participate in a ministry and have our collective consciousness raised about homelessness. This program becomes the most popular of all our mission projects until its conclusion in 2018.

2009-2010

Session votes to focus on hospitality and welcome for the "school year" 2009-2010.

2010

Israeli Apartheid: Dave Jones authors an overture to GA "to recognize that Israel's laws, practices, and policies in the West Bank constitute apartheid against the Palestinian people." This overture causes a heated debate locally and nationally.

The theme for Lent is "An Acceptable Fast," focusing on the environment. An environmental theme is also chosen for Lent 2017.

March 2010

Several hundred people attended a FOSNA (Friends of Sabeel North America) conference at our church. (For a list of the speakers and seminar leaders, go to fosna.org and search for Marin County/Bay Area Conference Friday, March 5, 2010 to Saturday, March 6, 2010)

Spring 2010

The first Holy Humor Sunday worship service is held the Sunday after Easter: "A San Anselmo Home Companion." Holy Humor Sunday has been an annual event since then.

Fall 2010:

The annual officers' retreat is based on the book, *Our Iceberg Is Melting*.

December 2010

We offer our first Blue Christmas service for people struggling with the holidays.

2011

Diana Bell is installed as Associate Pastor for Children, Youth, and Families.

We adopt Godly Play as our children's Sunday School program.

2011

The website is moved to a Wordpress platform hosted by Pair.com under the guidance Martha Olsen Joyce. The website was designed for the congregation – featuring access to sermons, a pastor's blog, a church calendar, news articles, and the ability for members/viewers to comment on sermons and blogs.

2011

The musical maestro Daniel Canosa is selected as Director of Music.

Our website is updated, led by Martha Olsen Joyce. <http://archive.togetherweserve.org/>

Diana Bell officiates at the first of four full immersion baptisms held in our sanctuary, using a borrowed portable pool.

2013

Following an incident which causes us to re-examine our policies, we adopt a Healthy Boundaries Policy that applies to staff, volunteers with children and youth, and others.

May 2013

Pastor Whitt takes a 3-month sabbatical that she describes as "a particular blessing." In the Annual Report, she lists 3 things we do well: Justice, music, and hospitality.

2014

In the Annual Report, Pastor Whitt asks: "What does 'church' mean to us here in largely secular and relentlessly individualistic Marin County in 2015?" In the following years she answered that question by using everyday language in worship, by sermons that provide new interpretations of biblical texts that make sense in a culture shaped by science and the Enlightenment, and by applying those texts to life today. Pastor Whitt's sermons included in a time capsule demonstrate how she has applied Jesus' message of love and justice to the lives of believers and unbelievers alike, at a time when inherited systems appear to be falling apart.

2014

The congregation initiates a speaker series on climate disruption, called "Green Chautauqua," in partnership with 350 Marin, the Sierra Club, Sustainable Fairfax, and others these talks have filled our sanctuary and strengthened community partnerships.

The church experiences a budget deficit, the first deficit in years. The consensus of the Resources Committee, the Personnel Committee and session is that we will eventually need to become a one-pastor church.

Spring 2015

In response to the budget deficit, a group dubbed "The Balcony Team" initiates an all-church visioning process. Congregational workshops on the theme of "Where is God taking us?" confirm the belief we're doing what God is calling us to do and help us

explore how we can support our vision financially.

Summer 2015

The epidemic of police killings of unarmed black men triggers a mission focus on racism and white privilege. It begins with folding and sending 1,000 origami cranes to the Presbyterian church in Ferguson, MO as a show of prayerful support, and grows to include two Sunday Seminar series featuring superb videos, an ongoing study by the session of books on race, a blog by Pastor Whitt on how to merge Black History Month and Black Lives Matter into Lent, advocacy for retaining affordable housing in Golden Gate Village (Marin City), and more.

Session approves hanging a rainbow flag on the front wall of the sanctuary to celebrate the June 26, 2015 Supreme Court approval of same-sex marriage equality.

Session approves hanging a “Black Lives Matter” banner on the front wall of the sanctuary to express our alarm at racially-motivated murders. Based on positive reaction from neighbors, we struck a chord.

2016

A large, timely bequest delays a decision about a reduction in the pastoral staff.

The choir’s stunning performance of “The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace,” including the Muslim call to prayer sung by a local Marin muezzin. Our choir was the only American group invited to join an international chorus to perform “The Armed Man” at Carnegie Hall.

Fall 2016

Associate Pastor Diana Bell formally comes out to the community as “not straight” or “queer.”

We commission Peter Anderson to represent us at Standing Rock, ND where indigenous peoples from all over the Americas joined in the protest against an oil pipeline installation. We buy Peter a Sioux tipi to use during his stay at Standing Rock.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, the wider San Anselmo community is invited to participate in an election prayer net by tying strips of red, white and blue fabric on a fish net hung near the sidewalk.

2017

Associate Pastor Diana Bell leaves us to accept a call from a church in San Francisco.

In June we launch a three-year capital campaign to fund long-needed improvements to our buildings and grounds. Our dream is a church campus that better meets the needs of our congregation and community. Our pledge goal of \$400,000 is not only met but exceeded by \$19,000.

2017-2018

Working with the Center for Progressive Renewal, the “Next Level Team” begins improving our welcome, outreach and communications, including a change of logo in 2017 and a revitalized website in 2018, created and managed by Martha Olsen Joyce. www.togetherweserve.org.

September 2017

Session votes to make anti-racism “a regular item for study and action for at least the next year in order to ‘build the issue into the fabric of the church.’”

February 2018

Every third Sunday becomes “Family Sunday,” a more interactive and hands-on worship service designed for people of all ages. Family Sundays continue each month through May, 2019.

May 2018

Session approves motion to join the Marin Organizing Committee.

June 2018

Through the efforts of the Marin Organizing Committee, the R.E.S.T program is replaced by a “housing first” policy seeking alternative housing arrangements.

October-November 2018

Hurricane rebuilding trip to Puerto Rico.

We adopt (provide financial support) to a family wiped out by the Camp Fire in Butte County, CA.

Fall 2018

Every third Sunday, the Sunday Seminar is dedicated to the study of climate change under the direction of Elder Royce Truex.

December 2018

Pledges for the capital campaign of \$400,000 come in \$19,000 above the goal.

April 2019

The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, Pastor and Head of Staff since 2005, announces her retirement date of October 6, 2019.

Virginia Thibeaux retires as volunteer editor of the church newsletter, the Kensington Press, and session decides to stop publishing a monthly newsletter in paper form. News articles will be shared with the community on the website and via email to subscribers.

August 2019

Session approves the motion from the Church & Society Committee to designate our church as a “More Light Church.”

August-September 2019

Sixty-three 320-watt solar panels will be installed on Duncan Hall and 24 320-watt panels on the preschool. This will be a 30kW system, about double the size of the 2004 installation on Duncan Hall.

Congregational Discernment

All-Church Workshop

As part of our mission self-study process, we conducted an all-church workshop on June 2, 2019 in Duncan Hall, Breaking into small groups, and later grouping responses, we answered the following questions. For each question, we'll share a "word cloud" which helps visualize the key concepts that emerged.

1. What are the strengths of this congregation?



3. What areas would you like to see strengthened?



2. What are the things (programs, people) of which you are most proud?



Written Surveys

During July, we collected 100 responses to a survey (paper and digital).

Mission Study - Congregational Survey
We value your voice. Please share your thoughts, values and hopes with us.

- Years as a member or friend of the congregation (check one)
 less than 1 year 1-2 years 3-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16+ years
- On average, when you are in town, how many times do you attend the worship service on Sunday? (check one)
 less than once a month Once a month Twice a month Most of the month Every Sunday
- How involved in the life of this church's programs are you? (e.g. fellowship, committees, small groups)
 not involved little involved somewhat involved moderately involved highly involved
- On a scale of 1-5, the fellowship I feel from others is:
1= cold, distant 1 2 3 4 5 5 = warm, personal
- On a scale from 1-5, I think of Sunday worship at First Pres. as:
1= dead, boring 1 2 3 4 5 5 = alive, compelling
- On a scale from 1-5, I believe our church community is:
1= fractured, fighting 1 2 3 4 5 5 = cooperative, trusting
- What aspects of the church are most important to you? Check your top THREE.
 being in community with others growing spiritually
 opportunities to serve inspiration based on scripture
 learning what it means to lead a Christian life experiencing great music
 listening to great sermons learning about Jesus's life and teachings
 opportunities to learn about issues that affect our world (e.g. climate change, social justice)
- If you live with a spouse or partner, do you attend worship together? (check one)
 Yes No Sometimes Not Applicable
- Do you have children living at home? Yes No
If yes, what are their ages? _____
If you have children at home, do they participate in the life of this church?
 Yes No Sometimes or Rarely

Please Continue on the flip side of this survey

Written survey (continued)

10. What drew you to this church?

11. What keeps you connected to this church?

12. What, if anything, would you like to see added to the life of the church? (Think of the opportunities to participate outside of Sunday worship service.)

13. Is there anything you would like to say that is not covered in the survey?

14. Age (check one)

Below 25 25-40 41-59 60-75 75+

15. Gender (check one)

Male Female Other Prefer not to say

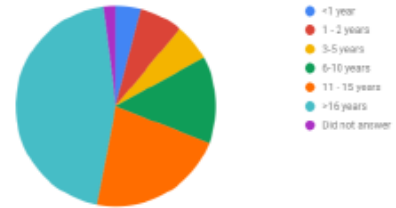
16. Optional

Your Name _____

Written survey responses

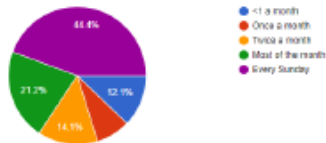
MISSION STUDY SURVEY RESULTS June-July 2019

How many years have you been a member or friend of the congregation



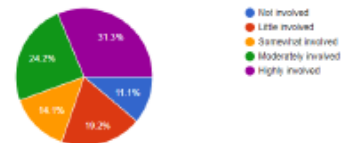
On average, when you are in town, how many times do you attend worship service on Sundays?

99 responses



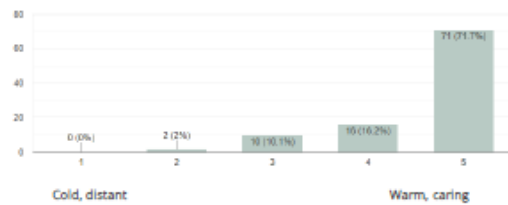
How involved in the life of this church's programs are you? (e.g. fellowship, committees, small groups)

99 responses



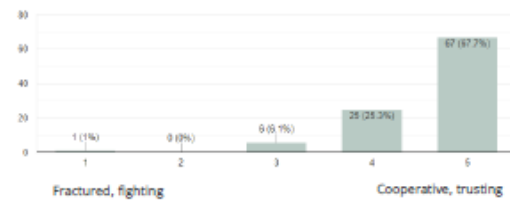
On a scale of 1-5, the fellowship I feel from others is ...

99 responses



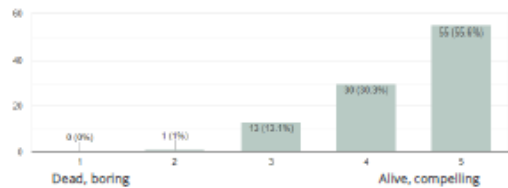
On a scale from 1-5, I believe our church community is ...

99 responses



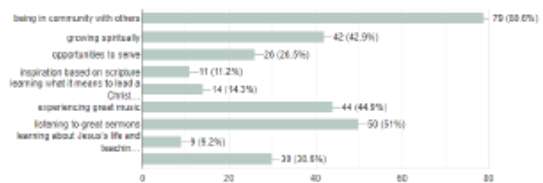
On a scale from 1-5, I think of Sunday Worship at First Pres as ...

99 responses



What aspects of the church are most important to you? Check your top THREE.

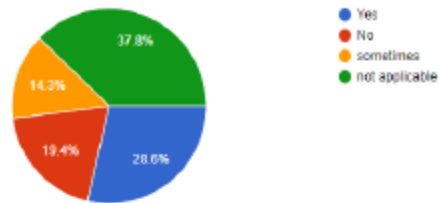
98 responses



Written survey responses (continued)

If you live with a spouse or partner, do you attend worship together?

98 responses



Do you have children living at home?

95 responses



If you have children at home, do they participate in the life of this church?

16 responses

