



Mission Study Report - 2023



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Preface

The Westminster Presbyterian Church-Middletown, NJ (WPC) Session commissioned a Mission Study Team in May 2023 under the recommendations of Reverend Dr. Robert Morrison and the Coastlands Presbytery. Our Mission Study Team (MST) set out to facilitate this process of reflection and conversation, with our first meeting held on May 21.

In the ensuing months, the MST led our Congregation in clarifying our core values, identifying what we believe are our strengths and weaknesses, and discerning the future towards which God is calling us. You will find the insights we distilled from the Mission Study in this Report.

The Mission Study Report represents a detailed profile of our church that will enable the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) to match suitable candidates for our next Pastor. We hope that the report will help Session and the Congregation to build on the many gifts and talents across WPC, as we look to a new decade of ministry - and beyond.

We would like to thank the many congregants who spoke with the team and attended the Town Hall Meeting. We are especially appreciative to the many who responded to the congregational survey. The thoughtful, honest responses allowed this study to be informative, enlightening and will provide a strong foundation for the ensuing pastoral search.

We would like to thank Reverend Dr. Robert Morrison for his encouragement and prayer throughout the process.

We believe we have a strong community of faith at WPC that is willing to grow in our service to Christ. We look forward to continuing our journey of faith together.

In Christ,
Your Mission Study Team



Mission Study Team Members

David D'Arcy - Chair	Brandon Hoffman
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Introduction

Change is certain in the life of every organization. Since March of 2020, Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) has faced a variety of challenges that eventually led to the undertaking of this study. Changes have been and will undoubtedly continue to occur as WPC moves forward with its search for a new Pastor.

On April 25 of 2022, then Pastor, Reverend Joseph Hein, announced his intention to retire. Reverend Hein gave two months' notice and planned his retirement for June 26, 2022. Reverend Hein's retirement was approved by the Session and eventually by the Presbytery.

In July of 2022, the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM) appointed a Moderator, Bisi Shofu, to assist the Session in finding an Interim Pastor. Following an exhaustive search, which yielded no results, retired Pastor, Dr. Reverend Robert Morrison submitted his resume and agreed to meet with the Session to discuss the Interim position. A negotiation resulted in a one year contract with Reverend Morrison. The one year term began in October of 2022 and expired on October 1, 2023.

Reverend Morrison's responsibilities included commissioning and guiding the Mission Study Team (MST). In April of 2023, the Nominating Committee selected seven members and one alternate to serve on the MST. The team was officially commissioned in May of 2023 and began its work on the study presented here.

Like the majority of the membership, the MST entered a period of reflection. This period of reflection provided space and time for us to process our feelings and prayerfully consider: Who are we, and what kind of church is God calling us to be? Where and how does God want us to serve in our next season? What kind of pastoral leadership will we need in our next season?

What the team found was a church that has mixed emotions. Some are concerned for the future of WPC. Churches rely on their Pastors to lead and maintain the church. Several churches in the greater Middletown area have disbanded and others, including some in the Presbytery, have struggled to find a Pastor. Others are confident WPC will overcome and find a Pastor who will help guide the church to carry out God's will for it.

Despite the mixed emotions of the membership, the team found that WPC is ready and eager to grow. This church is abundantly blessed with gifts for ministry. The study revealed a desire to improve upon the things we do really well and explore new ways to grow in number, expand our ministry to youth, and service Christ.

In preparation for this report, the team studied our church's history, ministries past and present, and financial status. The team prepared and distributed a comprehensive congregational survey to solicit input from the membership.

In September, the comprehensive survey was launched to the entire congregation, elaborating on the themes of individual and collective identity; assessing respondents' perceptions of all the ministries, programs, and operations of the church; and eliciting input on the desired qualities for the next Pastor. Approximately 185 members and friends of the church had access to the survey. In total, 81 surveys were returned and thoughtfully analyzed.

In October, the MST facilitated a Town Hall meeting with congregation. This allowed for an open dialogue between the congregation at large and the MST.

Finally, after careful consideration and prayer, the MST completed a final survey amongst the team on behalf of the congregants. The survey focused on leadership and competency and what the team believe the church desires in a new Pastor with regard to these qualities.

We hope this Mission Study Report will challenge and inspire you to be a part of God's plan for Westminster Presbyterian Church. With God's great love and grace, may our fears be turned into love, grief reshaped into new life, and our prayers transformed into deeds that forever glorify God. We eagerly anticipate and hope to learn how God will continue moving and working through us in the years to come.

Our Mission Statement

Westminster Presbyterian Church is a vibrant Christian congregation guided by the Holy Spirit. In partnership with God, we are engaged in the work of transforming people in light of the good news of Jesus Christ. We exist to make disciples of Jesus by leading individuals and families to come to know God, to develop a spiritual life, and to find meaning and healing in a community of acceptance.

Our Values

COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Strengthened by our history, anchored on faith and hopeful on the future, we serve together as members of Christ's body, the church.

SCRIPTURE

Firmly planted on the inspired word of God, we look to scripture to reveal how to live as followers of Jesus and how to disciple others.

MISSION FOCUSED

As servants, we care for strangers, comfort the sick, feed the hungry, help the oppressed, and share the gospel.

WELCOMING

Like the open arms of a loving family, we welcome others and weave them into the fabric of church life.

ENGAGED IN THE COMMUNITY

Fully committed to playing a role in our community through outreach and partnering with local organizations and representatives.



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Brief History of WPC

Presbyterians in Middletown Township have the unique distinction of belonging both to one of the earliest established congregations in the area and yet, at the same time, a newly organized church of the mid-twentieth century. The first Presbyterian congregation in Middletown was organized soon after 1700. A small graveyard still remains on the site of this original congregation. The church was burned to the ground by Hessian troops in 1777 during the American Revolution. Although the church was rebuilt after the war, the congregation was dissolved just before 1800.

Following a hiatus of some 160 years, efforts were begun in 1954 to organize a new Presbyterian congregation in Middletown. The Presbytery of Monmouth, most notably through the efforts of Harold Lindemann, an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Eatontown, observed that the increase in population of Middletown, recommended a new Presbyterian congregation be organized. In November, 1957, Reverend Harlan C. Durfee was called by the Presbytery of Monmouth to undertake the effort to organize a new church. The church was officially organized by the Presbytery on June 8, 1958, with 122 charter members. Reverend Durfee was formally installed on July 20, 1958. Following four years of worshiping in the ranch house on the original property, a sanctuary was built and dedicated on June 3, 1962.



In June of 1968 the Christian Education Wing was dedicated and in September of 1980, Harlan Hall was dedicated. Reverend Durfee retired in 1989 after serving the congregation for 31 years.

The Reverend Eugenia (Jean) Johnston was installed as pastor in November 1990. Reverend Johnston served Westminster until 1999, followed by Reverend Skip McCaulay from 2001 to 2004.

The Reverend Joseph Hein was installed as full time Pastor on September 23, 2007, and retired in July 2022 following 15 years of dedicated service.

Highlights of the last 15 years include the creation of the Plant-A-Row Garden (P.A.R.) on the front lawn of the church in 2009, donating over five tons of fresh organic produce thus far to various soup kitchens. The Westminster Nature Pre-School opened in 2009 with six students. The school now has a kindergarten and has been filled to capacity with 55 students year to year. The first Field of Flags was sponsored by the church in 2012, honoring all who had died in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.

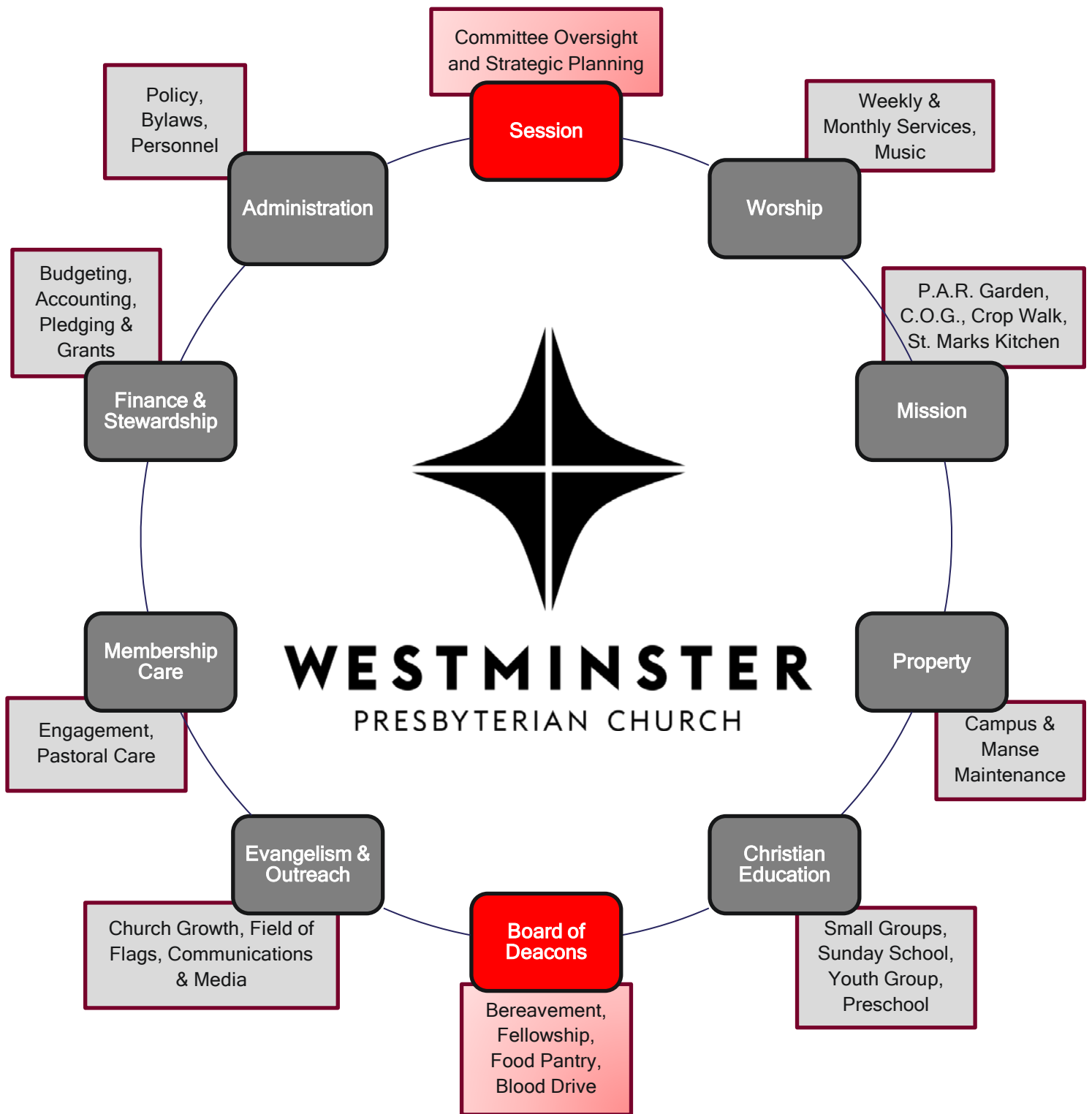
WPC became well known for its disaster relief efforts beginning with Superstorm Sandy in 2013, where the church was out in the streets of the community for weeks providing much needed food and other supplies and assisting with demolition and rebuilding efforts.

WPC continued in this caring ministry with Hurricane Harvey in Texas, and Hurricane Irma in Florida, both within days of each other in 2017. Two tractor trailers filled with relief supplies were sent, one each to Texas and Florida.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, WPC once again leapt into the fray with innovative ideas to help the community. The church held three “Pop the trunk” food drives and three “Pop the trunk” food distributions. During lent WPC held drive thru distributions of ashes on Ash Wednesday and distributed Palms in hospital parking lots on Palm Sunday. During the lockdowns and gathering restrictions, the church improvised to livestream the service with a cell phone. Today a state of the art video streaming system performs the same duty ensuring worship services can be experienced with those unable to attend in person.



How WPC is Organized

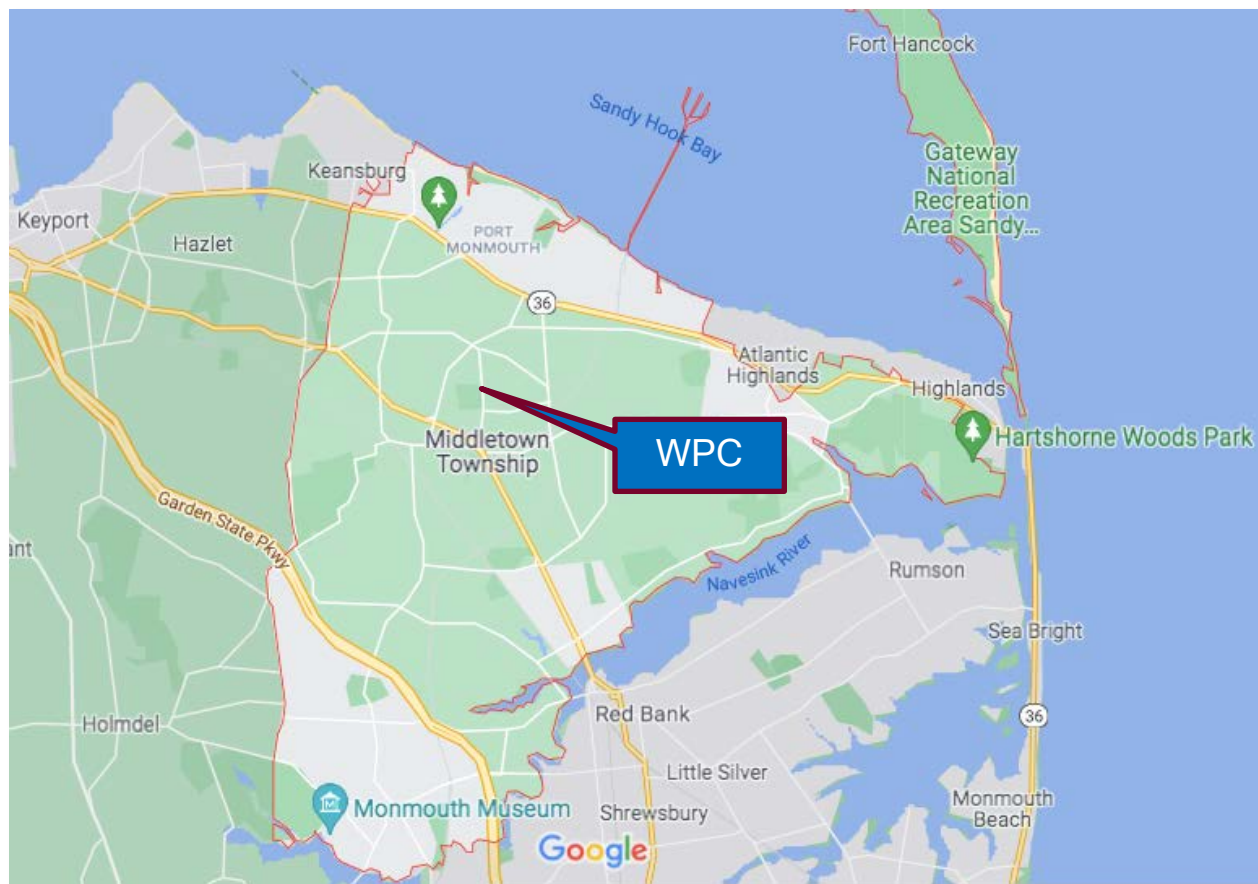


Red = Nominated/Elected Leadership

Grey = Standing Committees Chaired by Elders

WPC and Our Community

Westminster is centrally located in Middletown Township, NJ. The township is comprised of 11 villages and collectively is home to approximately 67,000 residents. The township represents a large portion of northern Monmouth County alongside the Raritan Bay known as the Bayshore. At nearly 60 square miles and close to 70,000 residents, Middletown is the largest municipality within the county.



Middletown is one of the oldest European settlements in the state. Initially a farming community, Middletown began to experience rapid growth in the Twentieth Century as the nation's economy grew and as more transportation options opened.

Today, Middletown is known as one of the nation's safest towns, and is a popular place for those wanting a suburban lifestyle with excellent access to beaches, parks, and ways to commute to New York City.

Many
Neighborhoods.
One
Middletown!



MIDDLETOWN

MATTERS

Middletown Ranked #1 Safest City in New Jersey and 8th in the U.S.

FALL 2017

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

PAGE 3

TOWNSHIP-WIDE

GARBAGE &

RECYCLING PROGRAM

PAGE 5

VETERANS

PAGE 6

Through the outstanding work of the Township's world-class Police Department, Middletown was ranked as the #1 safest city in New Jersey and the 8th safest city in the nation, according to The National Council for Home Safety and Security's *Top 100 Safest Cities in America for 2017* report.

For the second consecutive year, Middletown was also named one of the top 10 safest places to raise a child in the United States by Safewise, a national community-focused security organization, in their report *The 30 Safest Cities to Raise a Child*.

"We are proud to be recognized as the safest town in New Jersey, and once again named as one of the top 10 safest places to live in the country," said Mayor Gerry Scharfenberger, Ph.D. "Our Police Chief Craig Weber and the Department's community-oriented approach to policing, coupled with their proactive policing strategies that target crime, are just some of the reasons they are so deserving of these accolades."

"While many communities strive to provide a safe environment for



Police Chief Craig Weber visiting with students at Leonardo Elementary School.

Community programs include child safety seat installations, Police Youth Week camps, Project Plus, Rude Awakening, and the Law Enforcement Against Drugs program which utilizes *The Too Good for Drugs* curriculum in the Township's elementary schools.

A ferry terminal to New York City and a fishing fleet occupy the same land in the Belford section. Affordable housing units can be found in several areas. Hundreds of businesses from small privately owned shops to big name box stores and franchises line both state highways.

AT&T operates a national research and development facility and when filled to capacity, is the second largest office building in the country. Second only to the Pentagon in Washington D.C.

Middletown is home to over 40 township parks and playgrounds, 10 county parks, and the Gateway National Recreation Area, better known as Sandy Hook. The township operates a performing arts center, two recreation centers and two public libraries.

More than 20 churches call Middletown home. St. Mary's Catholic Church dominates the town in terms of membership and financially. Among the houses of worship there is one Mosque and a large Chinese Christian church. WPC is one of two Presbyterian churches in Middletown.

The Middletown Board of Education operates eleven elementary, three middle, and two high schools. Middletown is also home to Christian Brothers Academy, a private all boys Jesuit high school. There are several private schools and day care centers throughout the township and Brookdale Community College is located in the southern end of town in Lincroft.

Middletown is home to the waterfront side of Naval Weapon Station Earle in Leonardo. The US Navy uses the base to load ammunition onto ships on a finger pier that stretches 2.9 miles into the Sandy Hook Bay.

Middletown is home to many residents who commute to New York City. The town's location makes travel via car, train, and ferry very convenient. On September 11, 2001, 37 residents of the town perished in the attack on the World Trade Center. Middletown was the hardest hit of all suburban communities in New Jersey.

A memorial for the residents who were lost is located on Township property adjacent to the Middletown train station. The Memorial Gardens display 37 intimate monuments, one for each victim.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Age

Under 18	23.6%
21 and over	73.4
65 and over	15.4%

Sex

Male	50.2%
Female	49.8%

Race

White	90.6%
Hispanic or Latino	6.2%
Black or African American	4.1%
American Indian, Alaska Native	3.4%
Asian	3.4%
Some other race	4.3%

Household Income

<i>Label</i>	<i>Estimate</i>
Total Households	24,258
Less than \$10,000	1.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0.4%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	3.3%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	6.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	7.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	18.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	16.1%
\$200,000 or more	32.0%
Median income (dollars)	140,848
Mean income (dollars)	190,530

Occupation

Civilian employed population 16 years and over	34,923
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	59.90%
Sales and office occupations	21.10%
Service occupations	8.40%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	5.90%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	4.60%

Religion

57.4% of the people in Middletown are religious:

Catholic	42.7%
Judaism	3.3%
Methodist	2.5%
Presbyterian	1.5%
Another Christian faith	1.3%
Baptist	1.3%
Affiliates with Islam	1.2%
Episcopalian	1.0%
Lutheran	1.0%
Pentecostal	1.0%
Church of Jesus Christ	0.2%
Eastern faith	0.2%

Westminster's congregation largely reflects the demographics of the town in which it is located. Middletown is a diverse community while simultaneously inhabited by mostly white residents. The neighborhoods north of State Route 36 along the Sandy Hook Bay are home to largely blue collar, working class families. The neighborhoods south of the State Route 35 corridor are home to many middle and upper middle class families. Middletown is largely a thriving community but is not immune to many of the same contemporary issues facing the rest of the country.

While this report does not specifically capture the occupations and earnings of its membership, the MST can safely and accurately report that the membership largely reflects the demographics of Middletown in these respects. Westminster has members that earn across the income spectrum and who represent many different and unique occupations.

Our Ministries

Westminster strives to be an active and important center of Christian life for this community. The Mission Study Team set out to identify what exactly WPC does. We found a church that is blessed with talented leaders and volunteers, who faithfully serve God in the following ways:

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Westminster holds one service each Sunday morning at 10:00 which follows a traditional liturgy. Holy Communion is offered once a month on the first Sunday. Lay persons from the congregation serve in support of the service and a short children's message is delivered prior to dismissing them to their classes. The entire Sunday morning service is livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook.

Music is a special part of the worship experience at Westminster. The Music Director, Erika Sayar, is highly trained, multi-talented musician renowned in the greater Monmouth County area for her classical abilities. Mrs. Sayar puts her talent and experience to work in a variety of ways and orchestrates beautiful arrangements.

The full Chancel Choir performs weekly alongside frequent sponsored soloists. The handbell choir performs during special services. The Music Ministry partners with other local churches and Christian artists to deliver special music during worship throughout the year. The Music Director also organizes special events like acoustic Coffee House nights, Crossroads Cafes, and larger concerts on the front lawn of the church. Prior to COVID-19 the music program found success holding an all-day music festival called the Faith, Hope, & Music Festival. The festival featured popular contemporary and gospel bands and artists from the tristate area.



A special evening Taize service is held in the sanctuary once a month on the first Wednesday. The service offers an alternative to both traditional and contemporary worship in that it is built around scripture readings, simple meditative songs, and periods of silence and prayer by candlelight.

A special afternoon Praise & Prayer service is held in Harlan Hall once a month on the first Sunday. The service is an informal, interactive gathering with high praise and prayer filled with Contemporary Christian Worship music. A short, theme based lesson is delivered and attendees submit prayer requests, offer praise, and share testimony.

MISSION

WPC's greatest Mission impact is likely through that of the Plant a Row (P.A.R.) garden. A large garden on the front lawn, contains 21, all organic, raised beds. Volunteers from the congregation and the community plant, cultivate, and harvest a variety of produce every year. All of the produce is used to supply the Center for Community Renewal at Saint Mark's Church in Keansburg, NJ. The center is a functioning kitchen that provides free meals to the hungry and needy in our area. The garden's annual goal is to harvest 1,000 pounds of produce, a goal that is typically surpassed. Once per quarter, members assist Saint Mark's by cooking and serving meals.



WPC is a partner in the local Community Outreach Group (COG). COG operates a thrift shop and food pantry in Middletown. Several members of the Mission committee volunteer at the thrift shop and food pantry. The committee holds several food and home product drives to help resupply the pantry and occasional "back to school" drives to provide underprivileged families with school supplies. Additionally, the committee provides \$750 each quarter as part of the church's commitment.

The Mission committee participates on the annual CROP Hunger Walk in neighboring Red Bank, NJ. The committee collects non-perishable food items and monetary donations from the congregation. Prior to COVID-19, members also participated in the annual walk in Red Bank.

Every fall the committee oversees a toy drive for underprivileged children from the Monmouth Family Health Center. The toy drive culminates with a special Christmas party at the center where the gifts are presented to the children.

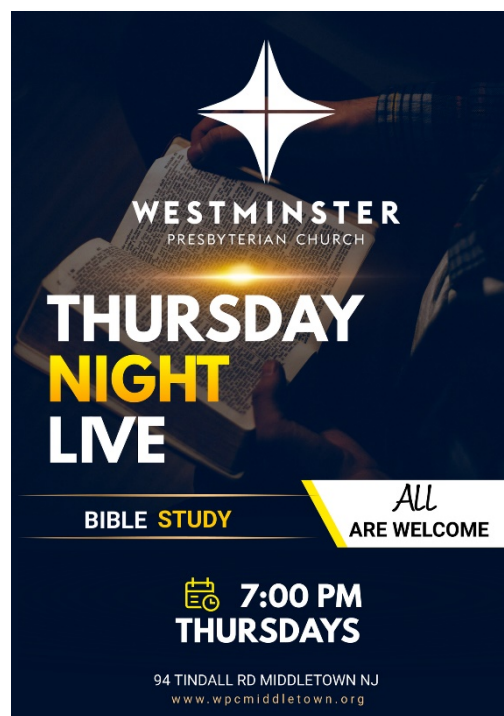
A small group of knitting and crocheting enthusiasts create blankets and prayer squares and supply them to those in need of comfort. The effort is primarily focused around the needs of patients from Riverview Medical Center in Red Bank, NJ.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

WPC is committed to the discipleship process. The Christian Education committee utilizes volunteers from the congregation to provide Sunday school classes for school aged children and teens, grades kindergarten through high school. Nursery care is provided on Sunday during worship for pre-school aged children.

Over the years, WPC has been home to a vibrant youth group. A decline in youth attendance has led to the lack of youth group as a ministry, but a revived effort in 2023 may yield results.

The committee organizes two, small group, Bible study opportunities for adults. On Monday mornings, interested members gather to explore a particular passage of scripture, theme or word and their meaning. On Thursday nights, interested members gather for “Thursday Night Live”. Through various book, digital media, and scripture based studies members explore themed multi-week programs to help deepen faith and connection and commitment to Christ.



EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH

The committee strives to advance the Gospel through a variety of methods. It also works to increase the footprint of the church and grow our membership.

In 2012, in response to the growing number of US soldiers lost in combat and the impact the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were having on the country, WPC utilized our front lawn (The Great Lawn) to pay homage to the fallen. For each soldier lost, the church planted a United States flag on the “field” and “Field of Flags” was born. Members from the congregation and the community were invited to help plant the field and a dedication ceremony was held during Veterans Day weekend.

WPC has held the Field of Flags every year since and continues to pay homage to our Veterans. Residents of Middletown and the motoring public all know the church as “The one with all the flags!”

Field of Flags has been a very important and rewarding event for the church and the greater Middletown community. Over the years the dedication ceremony has been blessed to have marquee names as keynote speakers and helped to honor our Veterans while simultaneously spreading our ministry.

Field of Flags has played a role in Middletown's long history of patriotism and helped to shed a light on the after effects of war on our soldiers.

In recent years, WPC has organized two unique events with the intention of sharing part of the story of Jesus' life. During the spring, prior to Easter, WPC transforms the Great Lawn into snippets of ancient Israel and produces a walk through experience called, "Walk with Jesus". The event gives visitors the opportunity to "walk" the last week of Christ's life on earth. At each stop, visitors are treated to scripture references, mock artifacts, and food samples which occurred and existed in Jesus' lifetime. The walk culminates with a life sized tomb and rolled away stone display.

In the late fall, WPC transforms the campus and Harlan Hall into Bethlehem. Visitors are given a chance to learn, experience, and sample portions of ancient Israelite life during Jesus' time. Food samples, craft building, textile making, a real life manger, and petting zoo put smiles on those who "Come to Bethlehem".



FOOD PANTRY

The Board of Deacons operates a small food pantry out of Harlan Hall. Food drives are held periodically throughout the year. WPC members open their hearts and wallets to supply the pantry every time.

The pantry is used to supply anyone in need with non-perishable food items. During the year, the Deacons hold a food drive ahead of Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The Deacons supply any unmet food needs and provide a holiday meal to local families in need. Over the years the pantry supplied as many as 16 families per year, but that number has been reduced to five at the time of this report.

OTHER AREAS

Throughout the years WPC has established, participated in or organized several other areas of ministry. Some reoccur annually, some were offered temporarily, and others served a specific purpose for a limited time. Some of those areas include:

- **Worship**
 - Persecuted Christians Ecumenical Services
 - Benefit/Aid Concerts
 - Pancake Dinners
 - Pot Luck Dinners
- **Mission Committee**
 - PCUSA One Great Hour of Sharing Offering
 - PCUSA Peace and Global Witness Offering
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Disaster Relief
 - Aged Out Angels
- **Evangelism & Outreach**
 - Middletown Day
- **Membership Care Committee**
 - Monthly Men's and Women's Breakfast Gatherings
 - Name Tag Sundays
- **Board of Deacons**
 - Blood Drives with the American Red Cross
 - Spaghetti Socials

Our Financials

Westminster relies almost exclusively on annual pledges from its members to operate the church. The church receives a monthly gift from the Nature Pre-School in the amount of \$1,250. The church is no stranger to the downward trend found across the nation regarding church affiliation, membership, and attendance. Fewer members on the rolls and in attendance translates to fewer pledges and income. WPC has no special endowment or substantial savings or investments and has operated in a deficit the last three years.

In addition to the church campus, the church owns a single family home in town to be used as a manse. The home is located in the New Monmouth section and is a 2,000 sq. ft. split level, with four bedrooms and two and half bathrooms on a 15,000 sq. ft. lot. This property was last assessed for \$448,300.00.

SPECIAL CAMPAIGNS/CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Westminster has a long history of raising funds for special projects. Most recently, the Finance Committee ran a campaign to raise \$7,000. The money was used to offset the cost of the commercial grade refrigerator replacement in Harlan Hall.

AT A GLANCE - 10 YEAR INCOME VS EXPENSE

Year	Income	Expenses	Surplus/Deficit
2012	\$203,190.00	\$173,421.00	+\$29,769
2013	\$212,885.00	\$196,293.00	+\$16,592
2014	\$203,170.00	\$182,274.00	+\$20,896
2015	\$207,163.00	\$187,606.00	+\$19,557
2016	\$218,717.00	\$196,620.00	+\$22,097
2017	\$202,182.00	\$199,803.00	+\$2,397
2018	\$206,499.00	\$197,616.00	+\$5,883
2019	\$213,821.00	\$161,649.00	+\$52,172
2020	\$185,376.00	\$205,863.00	-\$20,487
2021	\$202,450.00	\$216,101.00	-\$13,651
2022	\$175,362.00	\$201,202.00	-\$25,840

SAVINGS, OPERATING & LOAN (THROUGH 2022 TOTALS)

Building Fund	\$46,071
PCUSA CD	\$23,556
Memorial Funds	\$38,818
Operating Fund	\$53,747
Loan	\$77,432

GRANTS

Westminster has been the fortunate recipient of several grants over the years. Most recently, the church took advantage of Paycheck Protection Program grants from the Federal government early in the COVID-19 pandemic.

WPC has also received grants from the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. The funds were used to hire security personnel for worship services and special events. Other security funds were used for target hardening.

In 2021 the church was targeted and vandalized several times. The actor used rocks to break several windows in the pre-school and Harlan Hall. One incident occurred while the congregation was in worship on a Sunday morning.

The grant funds were used to install safety glazing on the school windows, improve lighting throughout the church campus, and replace existing sanctuary doors with commercial grade doors equipped with panic hardware and stronger locks, and an extensive video surveillance system.

All of the recently awarded grants have concluded and been closed out with the awarding agencies.

Congregational Survey Results

The major goal of the survey was to form a basis for who we are individually, who we are collectively, and what type of Pastor we believe will best lead us in the future.

The survey was organized into six major sections and contained 39 questions. The major sections were organized as follows:

- Section 1 - Who are we individually?
- Section 2 - Who are we collectively?
- Section 3 - What do we do best?
- Section 4 - What is God calling us to do and be?
- Section 5 - What do we want our next Pastor to do and be?
- Section 6 - How are we feeling about our future?

See Appendix A for the survey and Appendix B for the complete results.

Who are we individually?

DEMOGRAPHICS

The respondents over represent the older cohorts of the congregation. A vast majority of the respondents are married. The majority do not have children living at home, and most of the children living in the home are post-high school. Most respondents are retired; most have earned at least an Associate's degree. The respondents typically drive 15 minutes or less to travel from home to church.

CONGREGANTS' PERSONAL HISTORY WITH WPC

The typical respondent has attended Westminster for at least five to ten years and is a member of the church.

The factors that most often attracted respondents to Westminster originally, in order of importance, were:

1. The congregant knowing a friend or family member already attending
2. The pastor
3. The church's Presbyterian denomination
4. Being invited by a members
5. Feeling welcomed by the congregation
6. Convenient location
7. Reputation of the church
8. Programs for children and youth
9. Being a well-established church

The reasons they stay, again in order of importance, were:

1. The welcoming congregation
2. A sense of belonging and connectedness
3. My spiritual needs are being met
4. My friends or family attend
5. Presbyterian denomination
6. The pastor(s)
7. The music ministry
8. The preaching
9. Convenient location
10. Inclusive congregation
11. My gifts and talents are being utilized and nurtured
12. My participation in fellowship activities
13. Beautiful sanctuary and campus
14. Reputation in the community
15. Well-established church
16. My participation in adult Christian Formation
17. My participation in the music ministry
18. Reformed theology
19. Virtual worship services
20. My children's participation in Children's or Youth Ministries
21. My participation on the Session
22. My participation in Local or Global Outreach initiatives
23. Being a recipient of congregational care
24. Being a provider of congregational care
25. Being a recipient of pastoral care
26. My participation in Youth Ministries

Most respondent's value Presbyterianism, but chose Westminster primarily for other reasons.

CONGREGANTS' INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES AS PRESBYTERIANS: BELIEFS

Most respondents describe their knowledge of Presbyterian reformed theology, as well as their knowledge of the Bible, as average or greater; most believe that the Bible is the Word of God and serves as a rule for faith and practice.

Most respondents are comfortable talking about their faith if an opportunity presents itself, although some say they do not need to talk about their faith, because their lives and actions speak for themselves.

CONGREGANTS' INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES AS PRESBYTERIANS: PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH LIFE

The vast majority attend worship services 2-3 times a month. Participation in church life is relatively unchanged in the last three years. A small minority cited COVID-19 as a reason for their decreased participation, while a few cited COVID-19 as a reason for their increased participation.

Who are we collectively?

THE CORE OF THE CONGREGATION'S COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: WORSHIP

The respondents view worship as the core of Westminster's collective identity and the sermon as the single most important element of a worship service. Sermons that are theologically grounded are most valued; at a slightly lower tier of importance, respondents prefer sermons that motivate congregants toward Christian action, and provide an opportunity to learn something new.

Music, specifically the choir, is highly valued by the respondents and considered an integral part of worship.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS: MISSION (OUT-REACH) AND CONGREGATIONAL CARE

A substantial majority favor focusing more of our resources on Local Outreach than on Global Outreach. With regard to extending or limiting our mission partners, the respondents were essentially split even.

What do we do best?

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of Westminster's many ministries. Over the past five years, the Music Ministry, P.A.R. Garden, Sunday Worship Services, Praise & Prayers, Deacon's Pantry, and Thursday Night Live were viewed as highly or most effective. The Monday Morning Study, Youth Ministries, and Taize Worship were viewed as less effective.

The respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of Westminster's many outreach events and programs. Over the past ten years, Field of Flags was overwhelmingly rated as the most effective. Disaster Relief and COG were viewed as very effective. The remainder received mixed reviews and the weighted average, in order of greatest to least, were Come to Bethlehem, Monmouth Children's Clinic Christmas Party, Walk with Jesus, and Habitat for Humanity.

What is God calling us to do and be?

WHAT ARE WE BEING CALLED TO DO AND BE MORE OF?

The respondents believe attracting more young families, growing our membership in general, and an increased emphasis and expansion of our youth ministry are most important to our church.

What are we being called to do and be less of?

Respondents were given an opportunity to write in their own responses. Twenty nine of the eighty one respondents provided a written response. In hindsight, this question was poorly worded. Its intent was to identify things the members thought we should do less of, but many members perceived this question to mean "do more or be less of". A common theme among those who responded was to grow the church, bring in younger families, and improve our youth ministry. See Appendix B for the full list of written responses.

What do we want our next Pastor to be?

PASTORAL ROLES

The respondents believe the following roles were most important; Minister/teacher of the Word, Worship planner and leader, Pastoral caregiver, and Spiritual guide. Something the respondents do not want is a Pastor who will adopt a social-activist role.

PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL PASTORAL QUALITIES

Respondents generally prefer a Pastor who will empower church leaders and the congregation to make decisions, welcomes innovative approaches, firmly grounds preaching and teaching in a Biblical context, promotes the spiritual development of the congregation, spends more time listening, has a relaxed, friendly, interpersonal style, and skillfully mediates conflict.

PERSONAL PREFERENCE

Respondents were given an opportunity to write in their own opinions regarding what they want in our new Pastor. A majority of those who responded want a Pastor who is Biblically based and centered on Jesus.

How are we feeling about our future?

A majority of the respondents expect to be an active participant in the church five years from now and are committed to Westminster. An overwhelming majority are hopeful for the future of the church.

Town Hall Meeting

On October 15, 2023, the Mission Study Team facilitated a Town Hall Meeting immediately following Sunday morning worship. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a summary of the MST's findings to this point, allow for an open dialogue regarding key areas identified through the congregational survey and for congregants to share what they deem important to the MST.

STUDY SUMMARY AND Q&A

The MST provided a summary of the study's findings. Following the summary, the MST opened the floor for a Question & Answer segment to answer questions about the study summary. The attendees had no questions for the MST.

QUESTIONS FROM THE MST

Next, the MST sought to confirm and finalize the church's perspective on the future by asking some final questions. The attendees were asked to provide short answers or "in a word" type responses. Two categories with two questions each were asked and discussed as follows:

THE FUTURE

- What would you like the reputation of WPC to be in 2028? The responses were as follows:
 - Well known for Christian values
 - Community leader
 - A sanctuary for those in need
 - Spiritual resource
 - More children
 - Biblical values
 - Community of faith
 - A Bible based church
 - Evangelism
 - Active youth group
- What is the best thing WPC can give the community/world in the next 5 years? The responses were as follows:
 - Hope
 - A safe space
 - Involvement
 - Just be here and participate
 - Having a process that transitions our youth from students to adult members
 - Jesus
 - A sanctuary

THE PASTOR

- What experiences, skills, and personal characteristics should the next Pastor/Head of Staff have in order to respond to God's call? The responses were as follows:
 - Good with youth programs
 - Close and personal with the members
 - Energetic
 - Optimistic
 - Engaging
 - Experienced with stewardship

- Has the ability to relate the Bible and teachings to everyday life
- A good counselor
- A good preacher
- A good educator
- A good speaker
- Good with children
- What would you like our next Pastor to know about us? The responses were as follows:
 - We are friendly
 - We are a little church with a big heart
 - There is a common sense of togetherness
 - We are a hard working church
 - We are dedicated
 - We are mission driven

PUBLIC COMMENT

- What do you need the MST to hear?
 - The congregational survey was great and the MST did a great job
 - The church needs a commitment from everyone for the future
 - If and when we call our next Pastor, I would like to see him/her reach out to members who no longer attend and encourage them to return
 - I think our next Pastor needs to be careful about including politics in their teaching. Try to keep politics out of the pulpit.

What We Would Like our Next Pastor to Do and Be

In the hope of painting an accurate and detailed picture of what we would like our next Pastor to do and be, the Mission Study Team listened carefully to our congregation through conversations, a Town Hall Meeting, and the comprehensive congregational survey.

RESULTS FROM CONVERSATIONS, THE CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY, AND TOWN HALL MEETING

As a means of consolidating the data from these sources, the members of the Mission Study Team utilized a list of leadership competencies and definitions developed by the Church Leadership Connection of PCUSA. (See Appendix C for the complete list.)

This list comprises detailed descriptions of the varied arenas in which pastors may be expected to perform, integrating personal and interpersonal pastoral qualities into the relevant, and sometimes intersecting, pastoral roles. Team members were asked to rate the importance of each of the competency descriptions on the list to convey their sense of what they had heard the congregation say regarding the most crucial qualities and proficiencies for our next pastor.

Following are the performance arenas, with relevant qualities for each, which were judged on behalf of the congregation to be very important for our next pastor. The overarching categories are presented in order of importance; the definitions and descriptions within each category are also arranged in order of importance. (See Appendix D for the full survey results.)

#1: Theological / Spiritual Interpreter

1. **Preaching and Worship Leadership** - Is a consistently effective preacher and worship leader; is able to inspire from the pulpit; communicates a clear and consistent message through sermons that are carefully prepared and artfully delivered; projects the identity and character of the congregation through worship leadership presence.
2. **Spiritual Maturity** - Shows strong personal depth and spiritual grounding; demonstrates integrity by walking the talk and by responding with faithfulness of purpose; is seen by others as trustworthy and authentic; nurtures a rich spiritual life; seeks the wisdom and guidance of appropriate mentors; is able to articulate a clear and consistent theology.

#2: Interpersonal Engagement

1. **Interpersonal Engagement** - Displays a consistent ability to build solid relationships of trust and respect inside and outside of the organization; engage people, organizations, and partners in developing goals, executing plans, and delivering results; use negotiation skills and adaptability to encourage recognition of joint concerns, collaboration, and to influence the success of outcomes.

2. **Motivator** - Creates and sustains an organizational culture which permits others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well; and influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.
3. **Initiative** - Demonstrates ambition is highly motivated; is action oriented and full of energy for things seen as challenging; seizes opportunity; pushes self and others to achieve desired results.

#3: Organizational Leadership

1. **Organizational Agility** - Is astute about how congregations and/or organizations work; knows how to get things done through formal and in- formal channels; understands the importance of supporting good policy, practice, and procedure; appreciates the power in the culture of a congregation; is politically savvy.
2. **Collaboration** - Has a natural orientation toward getting people to work together; shares wins and successes; fosters open dialogue; lets people finish and be responsible for their work; creates strong feelings of belonging among group members; is a good judge of talent and can accurately assess the strengths and limitations of others.
3. **Advisor** - An individual others turn to for counsel and guidance; provides coaching; expertise for congregations or other organizations.
4. **Strategy and Vision** - Sees ahead clearly, keeping focused on the larger picture; can anticipate future consequences and trends accurately; is future oriented; casts a compelling and inspired vision for a preferred future; sees possibility; crafts breakthrough strategies.
5. **Contextualization** - The ability to assess accurately the context, environment, history, relationships and uniqueness of a congregation or organization.

#4: Communication

1. **Public Communicator** - Demonstrates a comfortable ease when speaking in a variety of settings (both small and large groups); is effective at addressing a variety of topics; can get messages across with the desired effect.
2. **Communicator** - Advances the abilities of individuals and the organizations through active listening supported with meaningful oral and written presentation of information.

RESULTS FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY

Of all the data-gathering tools the Mission Study Team utilized, the Comprehensive Survey was the most structured and captured the voices of the widest audience. The survey assessed the priorities of the congregation with regards to our next pastor in two categories: the leadership roles in which we hope the pastor will excel, and, separately, the personal and interpersonal qualities we hope the pastor will bring to those roles.

PASTORAL ROLES

Respondents were presented with a list of nine potential roles for our next Pastor/Head of Staff and were asked to evaluate the importance of each. Seven of the nine roles – minister/teacher of the Word, worship planner and leader, spiritual guide, pastoral caregiver, visionary long-term planner, witness/evangelist, and church administrator – were rated as either very important or essential by at least two-thirds of the respondents. The most critical roles – minister/teacher of the Word, and worship planner and leader – were rated as very important or essential by an overwhelming 86% and 88% of the respondents, respectively.

PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL QUALITIES

The personal and interpersonal qualities the congregation would like to see in our next Pastor were assessed by means of a series of “forced-choice” questions that paired two pastoral qualities and required respondents to select the one that they would prefer – even though they might prefer both to some degree. This survey technique does not always allow individuals to fully express their personal views, but it does allow the collective perspective of the group to emerge, which was the intended goal.

The seven pairs of pastoral qualities, rank-ordered by the magnitude of the difference in the percentages who chose each option, are listed in the table below. The preferred quality is highlighted in blue.

Pairs of Personal and Interpersonal Qualities

Has a relaxed, friendly interpersonal style	or	Has a formal, reserved interpersonal style
Spends more time talking	or	Spends more time listening
Skillfully mediates conflicts	or	Encourages people to resolve conflicts on their own
Explores contemporary social issues	or	Firmly grounds preaching and teaching in a Biblical context
Welcomes innovative approaches	or	Honors the way things have always been done
Provides strong, decisive leadership	or	Empowers church leaders and congregation to make decisions
Promotes spiritual development of the congregation	or	Facilitates theological and Biblical education of the congregation

AN INTEGRATED PORTRAIT OF OUR NEXT PASTOR

As a final reliability check, the pastoral roles and qualities that had emerged as most important in the Congregational Survey were compared to the roles identified during the Town Hall Meeting and the Leadership Competency Survey.

The findings from these three data sources align quite well in their essential components, so these three views can be regarded as complementary and overlapping perspectives of what we hope our next pastor will do and be.

In Closing

As we finalize this report, we feel strengthened by what the study revealed. There is no doubt finding a new Pastor presents its challenges, but there is also no doubt that God has granted this church and its members with an abundance of gifts for ministry. Westminster is poised to continue doing good things and eager to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Mission Study Team is confident this study has identified what the Church is being called to be in our next season and what the next Pastor should be. The members of Westminster should share in the same confidence.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. Jeremiah 17:7-8