

# St. John's Presbyterian Church



## **2024 Mission Study**

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## **I. The Vision Committee**

We began as a group of individuals who dedicated themselves to creating a vision, led by God, for the future of St. John's. We came from varied backgrounds, and not all Presbyterian by birth. As we worked together, sharing opinions and ideas, we developed a sense of trust and respect for each other. The committee members were Amy Willoughby, Elaine York, CLP (Commissioned Lay Pastor), and Tom Day as the chair, with Interim Pastor the Rev. Kent Meads and Nevada Presbytery COM (Committee on Ministry) liaison, the Rev. Susan Goodman as our advisors.

One of our first tasks was to review and study data regarding the socio-economic make up of Reno as well as ethnicity and religious preferences of our area. After several meetings, a Congregational Questionnaire was distributed and collected, followed by an open congregational session after a Sunday morning worship service. We received over 50 written responses, and these were assembled and put into spread sheets for clarification and direction. This has led us to be able write our Vision Statement and to complete our Mission Study.

It is hoped that what we have done will be a stimulus to the congregation, most particularly to the Session and the Board of Deacons, that through our work they become aware of the marvelous strengths, abilities, and talents of this extraordinary church. Our hope and prayer are that from this realization they would then engage our suggested challenges, using them to stimulate their thinking and working together to move forward in faith, looking always to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfector of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We also hope and pray that what we have written will be a good and faithful guide for the future Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), helping them to indicate to candidates our strengths, our challenges, our hopes, and our dreams.

### **Our Vision Statement**

**WORSHIP GOD  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER  
SERVE THE WORLD**

## **II. St. John's History**

During the past 75 years, St. John's Presbyterian Church grew to a peak of about 900 members and attendees, experienced two periods of severe conflict resulting in loss of members, went through an extended period of healing, and is now, with a diminished membership of under 200, ready to define a new vision and move forward.

St. John's was born in 1949, during the post war boom. Rev. Rafe Martin, the organizing pastor, served 12 years. During that time, the congregation grew rapidly, moving from temporary quarters to a new building constructed by members themselves at the present site on Plumb Lane. Our tradition of music as an important part of worship began early, with the pastor leading the choir, the purchase of an organ, and relationships begun with the music department of the University of Nevada. Likewise, strong fellowship groups were formed during this period.

Rev. Willian Clawson came next, serving 11 years, 1961-1972. As the congregation continued to grow in numbers, the present sanctuary was built (dedicated in 1969), and the previous one became our fellowship hall.

Rev. William Barrett served the longest, from 1972 to 1992, and was named Pastor Emeritus on his retirement. One notable event during this time was a late-night fire that destroyed the Christian Education wing in 1976. That building was quickly replaced and expanded, providing space to establish a pre-school as a mission of the church. Other additions included a balcony in the sanctuary and a new organ. Membership reached its peak at this time. However, complaints against Rev. Barrett by a vocal minority resulted in a hiatus in his pastorate, 1985-86, and significant loss of members, who left to form another Presbyterian congregation.

Rev. Ned Benson served for 11 years, 1993-2006. Membership grew again, many improvements were made in the facilities, and endowments funds were established. However, Rev. Benson's strengths were offset by his authoritarian leadership style. Intense conflict between his detractors and his supporters came to a head in 2005, resulting in another major loss of members, and unresolved feelings among those remaining.

From 2006 to present we had a time of recovery and healing, led by interim pastors, Rev. Richard Hutchison, Rev. Richard Wiggers, and Rev. Nancy Martin Vincent, followed by the five-year pastorate of Rev. Thomas Baughman, then three plus years with Interim Pastor Rev. James Young. Rev. Helen Hutchison became pastor in January of 2019, and served until the spring of 2022. After going through the trials of the Covid pandemic with us, and some resulting conflict on how and when to reopen for in-person worship, she felt the need to be back closer to family and took a call that moved her back to Kansas. After six months of Pulpit Supply pastors, Rev. Kent Meads joined St. John's as interim pastor in November 2022. During this eighteen-year period we have had many funerals, our youth have grown and gone, and most of our new members are older, rather than young families. With aging comes more empathy and compassion, and that is one of our strengths, as we care for each other and reach out in mission. We are seeking a pastor who shares that compassion and will guide and support us as we seek to serve God faithfully and well.

### **III. WHERE WE ARE TODAY**

#### **Worship and Music**

Worship and music are a major part of what frames our identity as a congregation. We are very proud of our beautiful sanctuary, in which we enjoy a traditional form of Presbyterian worship. In our worship we are comforted and strengthened by sermons grounded in scripture and pertinent to the everyday circumstances of life, along with the sacraments, prayer, and powerful music. We have a mature congregation that came to St John's because of those traditions, and we have a responsibility to continue to provide a meaningful worship experience. There is a children's area in the sanctuary, and a short children's message is usually given so that they can be included in the worship experience. The Lord's Supper is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month, and on Maundy Thursday by intinction. Sunday morning worship services are also Live Streamed, which allows our members unable to physically join us in worship. Live streamed services are also watched by some members who have moved out of the area.

Throughout our history, music, both vocal and instrumental, has played a critical role in the life of the congregation. Our Director of Music leads our choir of approximately 25 members in beautiful songs that enhance the worship service. Worship music is generally of classical selections and hymns from the Presbyterian Hymnal, as well as other hymnals, and accompanied by our magnificent hybrid pipe organ or the baby grand piano. We also have a beautiful harpsicord that is frequently used during worship. We feel the music played throughout our service helps all who worship experience that God is in this place. Two special services are held annually that have unique music - The Kirkin' O' the Tartans Sunday, where traditional Scottish music is provided by the Sierra Highlanders Bagpipes and the Christmas Cantata performed by our Chancel Choir and accompanied by an orchestra of approximately 20 musicians. Both services attract a large number of non-members from throughout our community.

We understand that our traditional worship service is not for everyone and has certainly affected our ability to attract younger adults and young families. We believe some simple changes would make our worship service more inviting to that demographic. We need to be willing to try new methods of worship, without losing our primary focus.

## **Programs and Activities**

Sunday morning worship is the vital core that brings us together as a community of faith. Beyond that, the life and work of our congregation is found in a varied array of organizations, both formal and informal—from the twelve members of the Session, and its eleven committees, and our twelve Deacons, to Presbyterian Women, Mariners groups, a Knitting/crocheting group, and a monthly book club, as well as gatherings that don't get on

the church calendar, such as those that meet for lunch after worship on Sunday.

Our Deacons are the designated leaders in the ministry of compassion, but other groups share in this, as they demonstrate caring friendship for their own members, especially in time of need, and have mission projects to help others. Deacons distribute holiday baskets at Easter and Christmas to those in our congregation that are homebound for various reasons. They send cards and call or visit when members are ill or grieving and provide meals as appropriate. They also coordinate receptions after funerals in the social hall.

The Fellowship and Nurture committee is active all year long, organizing meals or receptions for gatherings such as our annual congregational meeting, Ash Wednesday service, the chili cook-off, the annual all-church summer picnic, and other opportunities for fellowship. One special annual event is the mother-daughter lunch the day before Mother's Day, with the men of the congregation as servers. They also schedule volunteers that provide coffee and cookies for the fellowship time after worship in Martin Hall.

The Christian Education Committee provides a weekly Together Time for the students of St. John's Children's Center, where a bible story is presented to them. There is an adult education class on Sunday mornings before worship, but we currently struggle with a lack of children and youth, so there is no Sunday School program at the present. In November, there is an afternoon of craft projects for families, in conjunction with the start of Advent. The committee also sponsors an Easter Egg Hunt, Vacation Bible School, and a Trunk or Treat at Halloween, all of these being open to the community. For many years, the committee has also supported the Souper Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl Sunday. This year that was moved to the Mission Committee.

St. John's has always had a strong presence on the Nevada Presbytery, with many of our members both serving on committees and chairing committees, serving as Stated Clerk and as the Moderator of the Nevada Presbytery.

Our church is a congregation of overlapping communities, including a variety of groups and activities that embody differing blends of fellowship, spiritual growth, and mission. Our congregation and these communities are open to anyone who wishes to participate.

## **Mission Outreach**

One of the greatest strengths is our dedication to mission, both within and beyond the walls of our church. St. John's is an active participant in local mission projects in our northern Nevada community, international projects, and the ministries supported by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).

The congregation participates in three special Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) offerings throughout the year, One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost Offering, and the Christmas Joy Offering. Other projects the church joins in are the Souper Bowl of Caring, The Crop Walk for Church World Services in October, and Christmas stockings for Catholic Charities.

Locally, St. John's provides monetary, and/or item donations to the following organizations. Project 150, a non-profit dedicated to helping homeless, disadvantaged, or displaced high school students; Sierra Manor, a two-building apartment complex for low income seniors; Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Kids Cafe (a program of the Food Bank); Community in Schools of Nevada, a national program focused on Title One schools or schools with 40% population near the Federal poverty line, helping families navigate the maze of resources available to them; Catholic Charities/St. Vincent's dining room; and Eddy House, helping homeless and at-risk youth; Children's Cabinet, a non-profit whose mission is to keep children safe and families together. St. John's Mission committee also holds an annual Backpack Project where approximately one hundred backpacks, fully loaded with school supplies, are distributed to local schools in need. Recently, members of the congregation, with the support of the Mission Committee, have started volunteering with the Reno Burrito Project. Every other Sunday, the Reno Burrito Project makes and distributes 500+ burritos to the unsheltered in the Reno area.

Another mission outreach to our community is the use of our facilities to outside groups. There are 17 organizations outside of St. John's that use the building on either a weekly or monthly basis. These include both AA and Al Anon groups, Cub/Boy Scouts, Nevada Sagebrush Chapter DAR, lions Club, and living Church of God. Bella Voce choir, Sierra Highlanders Pipe Band, and several other music groups rehearse regularly in the facility. Several community groups use our sanctuary for concerts, including one of the local high schools.

Our St. John's members are very compassionate to tragedies that occur around the world, and responses to these crises through special giving to the Presbyterian Disaster Relief program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).

Jesus calls us to love our neighbors. The Mission Committee helps St. John's answer this call as best they can, with the generous support of St. John's congregation.



## **Communication**

St. John's has various ways of communicating to its congregation and community. As technology evolves, the church is adapting to using newer means of communication.

St. John's excels at using written media to inform the congregation and the community about the life of the church. The Sunday bulletin includes the order of the service, upcoming events, announcements, contact information for Deacons and Elders, and the church email address.

The church also has a newsletter called The Carillon which contains announcements and articles submitted by members, committees, and organizations within the church. The Carillon is posted on the website and also emailed out to those members who wish to receive updates.

The church also utilizes bulletin boards and flyers around the church for displaying information.

We have recently updated our website to include the newsletter, recorded sermons, the church calendar, and much more. The Multi-Media Committee is using social media to reach out into the community, including posting sermons on Spotify and Apple podcast. There is a slideshow in the Narthex that displays information as well as pictures of the life of the church.

During the Covid pandemic, St. John's, as well as many other churches moved to a Zoom worship service. As this service progressed, it was decided to upgrade to a live streaming format. With the help of a grant from Nevada Presbytery, we purchased and had installed the equipment needed, plus two large screens for the sanctuary. Now that we are back to live services, we are also still live streaming Sunday morning worship, plus some special services. The streamed services are archived on the St. John's website and can be accessed at any time.

## **Finances**

St. John's has regularly met our financial needs, through the generous annual giving of our congregation, with the current budget being \$481,285. Through the years, the church has received numerous financial gifts, many being bequeathed by members or former members. Some of these gifts have been designated to specific financial areas, while others have no restrictions on what they may be used for.

St. John's has a total of twenty-one endowment accounts, totaling over \$1.5 million. Seven of these are unrestricted accounts, with the remaining fourteen being restricted accounts. We receive quarterly payments, with the current annual amount being just over \$56K, of which 44% is unrestricted.

The Finance Committee, in the Fall of 2023, launched our 75th Anniversary Capital Fund Campaign, our first since our 50th Anniversary Campaign, with a goal of \$450,000. The first major project funded by this campaign was to completely replace the parking lot asphalt and install new parking lot lighting, and this project has been completed.

## **Area Demographics**

The demographics of the area have changed enough since the 2020 census, that the information found there is not entirely accurate. The following information is for Washoe County, NV, for 2023.

### **2023:**

Population: 482,334

Avg. Household Income: \$124,177

Median Household Income: \$73,196

Bachelor's Degree: 19%

Graduate or Higher: 10%

Average Home Cost: \$550-\$600K

## **IV. Looking Forward - Looking Outward**

*"We are at a crossroads. One is a blind road of inertia. The other requires the immediate action from every man and woman of the congregation."*  
(from a 1959 report by Rev. Rafe Martin, St. John's organizing pastor)

"As an aging congregation we have acquired a goodly store of experience and a certain amount of wisdom, individually and collectively. On the other hand, aging brings waning energy, increasing health problems, and a tendency to be settled in our opinions. As a mostly white, mostly middle to upper middle-class congregation, we have the financial resources to be a blessing to our neighbors. Our challenge is to be good stewards of the gifts we have been given - to use our money, our talents, and our limited energy wisely, and to be open to the leading of the spirit." (taken from the 2017 St. John's Mission Study Report)

As we look to the future of St. John's Presbyterian Church, there are several areas we need to address.

St. John's Presbyterian Church, as with many traditional Protestant churches, has a membership that is aging and, with few exceptions, we are not attracting the next generations. While an automatic response to this might be to make major changes to our worship service, it must be remembered that many of our congregation chose St. John's because of our traditional style of worship, including members that have joined in recent years. While striving to increase younger membership, it cannot overshadow the need to grow across ALL generations.

The Christian Education of our youth has always been an integral part of St. John's. However, as the membership has aged and the children have grown, they, like so many others across the country, have not stayed with the church. This has left a void in the Christian Education area of children and youth. With no children there is no Sunday School program, and with no Sunday School, it is not inviting to those looking to have their children in a program. While it will take some time and effort to build this program back, there are steps that can be taken to get that process started.

Having our name out in the community is an important part of growing the church, and this can be accomplished in different ways. St. John's information pamphlet/brochure needs to be updated and probably expanded, then distributed into the community, through whatever means is available to us.

Local missions are another way to make St. John's presence felt in the community around us and at the same time help those in our community. While St. John's supports various local charitable organizations, many in our congregation are not fully aware of all the mission work that goes on.

This should be addressed in some way. If many of our members are unaware of what mission work the church is doing, then how can we expect the community around us to be aware?

Visibility in the community should also include our actual physical visibility. The signage on Plumb Lane is very outdated and is not very visible as you drive by on the street.

The Mission Study Committee, using input from both the congregation and Session committees has compiled a list of Focus Goals that we think are obtainable in the next 3-5 years, several in a relatively short time. It will require the help of all our members, and we should not wait for a new permanent pastor to start that work. We thank you for your patience and prayers, and for your continued prayers as the process of selecting of a Pastor Nominating Committee and their work in searching for a new minister moves forward.

## **V. Our 3-5 Year Focus Goals**

**Grow our membership into the range of 350, with the congregation willing to entertain changes to increase beyond 350 and increase our average worship attendance from 130 to 250.**

Encourage members to invite new members and encourage non-attending members to attend.

Personal contact to be made by a member, other than their parent, with those young adults that grew up at St. John's, but no longer attend.

**Grow attendance of Sunday morning Christian Education of children, youth, and adults and add mid-week Christian Education opportunities.**

Evenings to include those still working, possibly include a little dinner. Start a children's class during worship service. After the children's message, those who wished could go to a class for a lesson and maybe a craft. Volunteers would be needed to be ready with a lesson when needed. Enough volunteers would make it so no one would need to have more than one week per month. If this grows enough, we can transition to a full Sunday School program either before or during worship. Growing children and youth programs would also help with growing the church membership.

**Membership/Welcoming Committee members canvas in Martin Hall each Sunday to seek out new people and those sitting alone.**

Membership/Welcoming committee to ask for volunteers. Couples working as ambassadors together.

**Continue to inform the congregation on Mission Committee work.**

Monthly moment for mission during worship.  
Display/information table in Martin Hall.  
Bulletin/Carillon write-ups.

**Increase St. John's visibility within our community.**

New signage along Plumb Lane  
The sign in the circular drive landscaping is very old and not very visible.  
A new sign in front of the old sign turned ninety degrees would present a readable message for traffic in both directions on Plumb Lane. Another location would be the grass area in front of the sanctuary. In either location the landscaping would have to be kept trimmed around the sign. A new sign would not necessarily have to be illuminated.

### **Updated the St. John's information brochure.**

This could be worked on by a small committee so as not to burden any one individual, especially the church Administrative Assistant.  
Both a print and electronic version.

Are there multi-media platforms where this could be posted?

Look Into areas where brochures can be available to visitors and new residents.  
(Reno-Tahoe Visitors Center, Reno Sparks Chamber of Commerce, etc.)

### **Strengthen the ties between St. John's Church and St. John's Children's Center (SJCC).**

Invite SJCC director to Session quarterly.

Make sure SJCC families receive regular updates as to the activities of the church, i.e., local mission projects, special services like Christmas cantata, activities like Christmas Craft event and Easter Egg Hunt.

Monthly morning greetings by members during drop-off time.

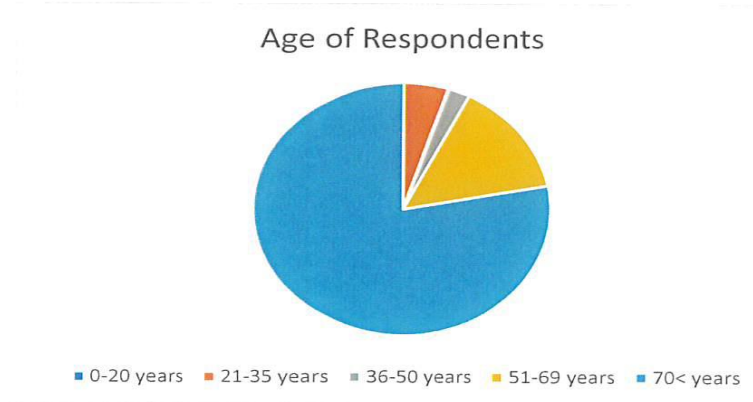
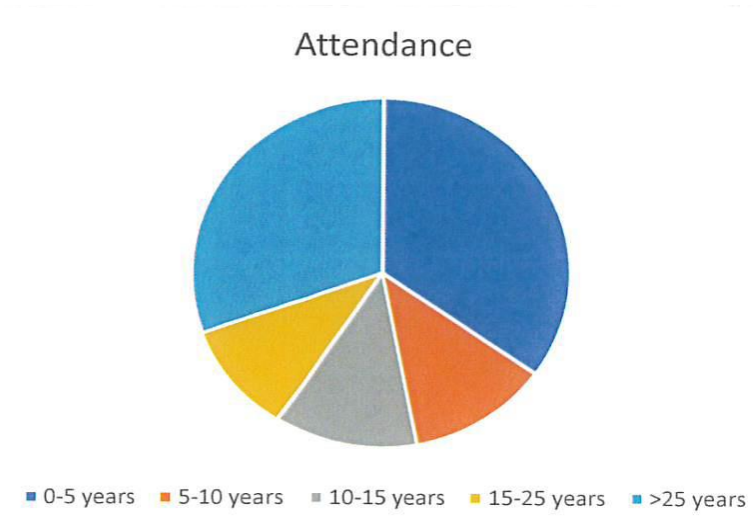
# Report on Congregational Survey Responses

Survey forms were available in printed form, downloadable pdf and google survey. We received 49 surveys, 37 distributed at church, 10 printed out at home, and 2 online.

Length of time attending St. John's:

- 0-5 years: 17
- 5-10 years: 6
- 10-15 years: 6
- 15-25 years: 5
- Over 25 years: 15

Of the 49 surveys collected, 37 came from members, 11 from non-members, 1 did not disclose this information.



- <20 years old: 0
- 21-35: 2
- 36-50: 1
- 51-69: 6
- >70: 37



To the question **4: *How involved are you in the life and ministry of St. John's apart from worship***, 7 respondents said not at all, 13 said occasionally, 15 said moderately and 13 said very. Some of the answers reported they used to be more involved or had just joined and planned to join other groups.

When asked ***what do you like best about St. John's***, 17 said music program or choir, 14 said the people and friends they have made, 21 said the service or the pastor sermons, with a number mentioning the Bible-based aspect of the sermons as well as the adult Sunday school classes. Several of the newer attendees said the coffee hour after the service. The word traditional was used positively in 5 responses. Several respondents mentioned aspects of the physical church such as the stained glass, and the facilities themselves like the kitchen and library, the big tables in Martin Hall, while others mentioned the service programs of the church. One person mentioned the streaming being a way to include those in the congregation who can no longer attend in person. There were a lot who specifically mentioned the warm, caring congregation and being able to worship with people who are friends as the thing they like the best. Making friendships in church that continue in activities outside of worship service is a common thread with respondents who attend St. John's and find the atmosphere welcoming. There were 44 responses to this question in total.

There were 29 responses to the second half of question **5: *What do you like least about St. John's***, and one of the responses was nothing. Several said it had been the parking lot and church politics/contentious experiences from the past. Five respondents specifically said they disliked the lack of children and young families, while several people mentioned the cliquishness of the congregation, lack of any real community, not enough activities outside of worship, and a lack of diversity in the congregation. A couple of respondents suggested that LBGTQIA+ persons would not feel welcome at St. John's. One respondent did not like the announcements before the prelude, while another respondent did not like people streaming from home when they could be in church instead. Several people felt that there were not enough people in Sunday school while another felt there was no acknowledgement of Christian Education. One respondent felt that more people needed to be involved as some members are on several committees. The idea of not enough involvement from other members came up in other questions as well. People also did not like that there were some activities that had been dropped in the recent year and a couple of respondents felt the music was too somber, and not joyful enough, and there were too many long pieces. Several of the responses phrased it in terms of what they would like to see more of, which was more social activities, and the return of the men's Bible study, a couple Bible's study and small group ministry. One response noted a lack definition in the mission projects of St. John's, and scattered support for the mission outreach the church does have. It is worth noting that one respondent who wanted more social activities was not a member of one of the Mariner's groups.

**6. *What is the purpose of St. John's***: There were 42 responses to this question, 5 of which were to say they did not know or were uncertain of the purpose. The word traditional was used twice, and mission was used 4 times in this section. Some of the answers seemed to attempt to describe what St. John's current function seems to be based on their understanding of it. For example, there were some responses saying the purpose was to serve an aging population, as well as to provide a place to worship in a traditional service with classical music; also mentioned were providing guidance, a

place to worship, a preschool. Preaching the gospel and offering people salvation through belief in Christ and helping members grow in faith were noted a number of times, along with providing the opportunity to serve others by mission projects in the local community. Community was used 13 times in this section, referring both to the church as a place that offers community, as well as service within the community. One answer referred to our current mission statement: Worship God, Love One Another, Serve the World as the being perfect.

**7. What is St. John's especially known for in our community:** There were 41 responses to this question, 9 of which were I do not know or unsure, although several of those responses indicated the Children's Center, a meeting place for community groups and feeding the homeless in the past. The Children's Center had the highest number of responses at 14, 8 responses mentioned community/service outreach, while 6 mentioned concerts and music & 3 said special events like Trunk or Treat and Holiday Craft Night (formerly known as ADVENTure Night) and 1 said St. John's traditional worship service.

**8. How easy is it for new people to get into leadership roles:** There were 38 responses to this question. The overwhelming majority, 26, said it was easy, if people were willing and wanted to get involved. Several respondents said they were unsure, and 4 said it was not easy, either because they had not been invited to serve, or because they see the same people volunteering to serve, and some are not willing. This made the Mission Study Committee aware of the need for better publicizing what committees need volunteers and how they can get involved even if they are not members, as well as information on church officer roles and requirements for those.

**9. Are there changes that could be made to make St. John's more appealing to young families:** There were 39 responses to this question, which were relatively varied, however 11 answers mentioned music, specifically more upbeat, modern, informal or guitar music. Ten answers included Sunday school and referred to programs that they said that have been successful in the past, and need to be brought back, such as VBS (which was cancelled in 2020 and 2023, but did take place in 2019, 2021-2022), Trunk-or-Treat, ADVENTure Night (which has been renamed, but has not been canceled, even taking place in 2020), Sunday school and a children's church program like the now defunct Kingdom Kids. Wednesday We Feed was also mentioned positively by a respondent in the 21-35 age range, who thought other non-worship related activities like a fun book club would be a good idea.

There were several who felt like we should talk to young families and find out what they want from church, as well as some who noted that our activities are geared more towards retired people, or people who do not work during the day. A number of answers reflected the idea that young families themselves have to get involved to create something within the church that they find meaningful, while some answers specifically addressed the idea of cross-generational activities and inclusion. For example, there could be family retreats, more classes geared towards different ages of adults or the entire family and providing active opportunities to serve and make a difference in the community. There were a couple of suggestions that younger families should feel free to weigh in on what they would like to see in a worship service, and St. John's should offer the opportunity to help introduce or lead new things. One answer mentioned that there should be more reaching out by older members to younger

families and not just socialization based on age. Older people could encourage their own local younger relatives to come to church and invite their own friends.

A few suggested reaching out to families at the St. John's Children's Center and offering scholarships. It should be noted that the Children's Center does offer discounts to families who are members. Finally, one answer did address the issue with there not being good starter homes for young families and another was simply "of course."

***What do you feel is the best time for Sunday morning worship service?***

9:00 am 1  
10:00 am 12  
10:30 am 35  
11:00 am 1

Other: 3 • no preference, • add a weeknight service, • or if we have 2 services, 8:30 am and 11:00 am

***Does our worship service have an inviting atmosphere to visitors?***

Yes 39  
No 2

Don't know: 1, Sort of: 1

- It offers this, but members need to focus on unfamiliar faces.
- we try

***Does the music program at St. John's enhance your Sunday worship?***

Yes 37 No 1 No opinion 1

- I miss the bell choir and children's choir
- Amazing music program
- When it is "on going"
- the best! It's why I chose St. John's
- yes, but I would like the prelude as the first thing

***If you have invited friends or neighbors to St. John's, how many have you invited?***

0 10  
1 9  
2+ 24  
2+ 1, family

***Are there reasons why you would not invite someone to St. John's?***

34 people answered this question, with 15 saying no. Reasons given ranged from peers being older and already having church homes, or not having interest in attending a Christian church. Feeling the church would not be inclusive to LGBT folks as well as not inviting people who want either a more ideologically conservative church, or who might want a more upbeat non-denominational church were also listed as reasons. Lack of younger people, dying church, geographical distance, having friends who are already attending St. John's, lack of friendliness of the congregation rounded out the responses.

***Do you attend any of the classes on Sunday morning***

Yes 21

- In the past 4 Some: 1

No 25

- just can't get there in time!
- usually in choir

***Do you attend the Presbyterian Women Bible study?***

Yes 9

No 26

***17. How important is a children's Sunday school program?***

Not important 2

Important 11

Very 18

Other 3

The comments to this question, of which there were 12, generally explained that there are no young families, so it would only be important if there were families, but that we should be ready if there are.

***18. What do you see as the most important spiritual needs of St. John's?***

There were 26 answers to this question, and there were 4 that expressed uncertainty about what the question was asking. One respondent said that church attendance helps to explore this question to discover what our needs are but felt that ultimately there is a spiritual need to be active helpers & changemakers in our community. The outside groups that use our church, and how the space was used was mentioned. Four respondents said the pastor or finding a new pastor is the most important spiritual need, while several answers said the Bible or Bible-based. A few answers were similar, indicating that communal worship, growing in faith and caring for one another and selling others on how we should live our lives are the spiritual needs of our congregation. In a similar vein, there were responses which said inclusion and mutual respect for all. Several respondents noted the need for more small groups and more people to become involved in the work of the church; several said the most important spiritual need was to attract and reach young families.

***19. Are you aware of the many mission projects that St. John's supports?***

The Mission Study Committee was given a report detailing the various projects in which the church participates. There were 26 positive answers to this question, 6 negatives and 10 written responses with answers that ranged from somewhat, to being very aware because they are involved or had learned about them from someone on the Mission Committee, through the Carillon and the Moment for Mission segment in church. The projects that were mentioned in the comment section were Project Backpack, Eddy House and Senior services. One comment expressed regret at the loss of Family Promise and preparing and serving meals in front of the VOA shelter. It should be noted that Family Promise lost funding and closed in this area, and the City of Reno discontinued serving food once the Cares Campus opened.

**20. Are there any changes that you would like to see made to the fellowship time after worship?** There were 30 responses to this question with 12 saying no changes. The changes suggested were to get better coffee, get rid of Styrofoam cups in favor of ceramic mugs, by moving refreshments nearer to Narthex, a monthly birthday cake, healthy food options for diabetics, and making more coffee. Some suggestions dealt with the social aspect and included such answers as question & answer with the pastor or a time to discuss spiritual questions that arise during worship, general discussion groups, bringing back potlucks & chili cook-off, welcome committee members or greeters near door to Martin Hall to help visitors feel welcome, but also to encourage visitors to come into the fellowship hall. One suggestion was to have an informational table about programs in the church, and more members answering questions about the church. Four responses expressed the desire to have more people volunteer to bring cookies, and to clean up.

**21. Do you feel the fellowship time currently has a welcoming atmosphere to visitors?** There were 33 responses which said yes, and 2 which said no. Some respondents indicated in the comment section indicated that they really did not know if the fellowship time were welcoming to visitors, but a number of respondents indicated it seemed like it would be welcoming, but it might be improved by more people talking to visitors and encouraging them to come to the fellowship time.

**22. Do you belong to a Mariner's group?** There were 20 no responses to this question, with one comment expressing no knowledge of what they are, and another comment which indicated the respondent did not know that they still met. There were 14 who said they participate in Flippers mariners, 7 in Discipleship and 4 in Anchors Aweigh.

**23. What preaching qualities are important to you in a new pastor?** Leadership received 42 votes, Preaching 41, Teaching 38, Interpersonal 31, visiting 21 and other 4. Visiting in time of need and training and equipping new leaders was mentioned as a necessary quality. The comments also specified more personal time with the pastor besides during the service, and that it would be good to have someone with whom to discuss personal matters without judgment. Finally, one comment specifically indicated a desire for a pastor who would be more youthful and would make a longer-term commitment.

**24. As we prepare our Mission Study looking to the future of our church, we would like to set 3 to 5 goals to build the future around. What are some of the goals you see as essential to the future growth of the church, both as a church family and within our Reno community?**

This question had the most responses, some very broad: grow the congregation, gain young families, attract new members, outreach, more interaction. Others were more specific, such as advertising, starting a basketball team, sending out brochures to the neighborhood, offering bus service to church, and outreach to groups that use the church. Most of the answers reflect the belief that St. John's Presbyterian Church needs to continue to grow the congregation and bring new people to Christ, with many responses indicating a need to bring in children, youth, or younger people in general. However, several respondents did reinforce the idea that St. John's Presbyterian Church should continue our current traditions, acknowledging that many who attend and join the church do so because they enjoy the traditional service and music, and the activities like Flippers mariners.

The idea that there is room enough to add some new hymns and continue to use multimedia and online classes was a recurring one in the goals section. A number of responses indicated the belief that there is a need for an alternative service with more current and lighter styles of music. There were also a lot of respondents who wanted to see more opportunities in the form of small groups, youth programs, classes and discussion groups. "A church without younger adults and children is a dying church" was one comment that echoed some answers given in earlier sections.

The idea expressed numerous times throughout the goals section is that the church needs to do more outreach, whether that is hands on mission work in the community, partnering with other churches, reaching out to the families at St. John's Children's Center and the outside groups that use the church. or interacting with students at the University of Nevada Reno, it was clear that many want St. John's to facilitate and support current congregants in these opportunities. Although some feel that part of the mission of St. John's Presbyterian is to minister to an aging congregation, the idea that we need multiple generations to truly thrive was prevalent in many of the sections of this questionnaire. The answers indicate that we at St. John's should be interacting with and serving God's children, mixing with those who do not go to church as well as those in other churches to exemplify Christ's teachings.

**Nevada Presbytery, Committee on Ministry Liaison - Rev. Sue Taylor observations and comments:**

*St. John's Church was (to my understanding) the first Presbyterian church in Reno, established some 75 years ago, during a time when churches were a focal point of family life. Over the decades, it has gone the way of many mainline Protestant churches with a diminishing and aging membership. Additionally, the church has been impacted by periods of acute conflict, which resulted in the loss of members to other churches. And then there was COVID...*

*St. John's honors a traditional (if not formal) worship style, with traditional organ music and a choir. Both the organist and choir director are highly qualified and exemplary in their roles. Preaching has been historically from the pulpit and Bible based in a sermon format. The former pastors at St. John's are well educated, the majority holding doctoral degrees, and have also offered classes with theological depth to the adult members of the congregation who participate.*

*Outside of worship, there are a few opportunities for small group activities (term "small group" being relative). Mariner groups are the largest social groups, with many participants having been involved for multiple decades. Some women participate in the Presbyterian Women's Bible study. Other than committee involvement and these two groups, there seems to be little by way of structured smaller group opportunities.*

*The lack of younger families and children is a great area of concern for the participants in the survey. As with the majority of mainline, Protestant congregations, most children who grew up in the church have moved away geographically from the church, or joined the growing mainstream of those who choose not to attend and be involved in a mainline church, or any church at all.*

*There is a perception (and perhaps, true) that what St. John's offers in terms of worship and fellowship does not meet the needs and/or interests of a younger generation. The majority of churches that attract young adults and their families tend to have a more contemporary worship style (contemporary music by a band; topical sermons based on issues facing young people/families, and how Jesus/faith can fix it). I would say many of them are more conservative in theology than the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).*

*In summary, St. John's is a rather typical mainline protestant church, well established with an aging congregation. Those who are involved are generally happy with the leadership (interim pastor) and the programs in place (again, with the exception of wanting young families and a children's program).*

*What is not reflected in the survey is the fact that under the leadership of the interim pastor, there are people interested in and joining St. John's (although currently some of those are from the United Methodist denomination which is in national turmoil), but they are in the "senior citizen" age range. The church continues to be active in its mission with a variety of outreach activities.*

*Personally, I do not think St. John's cannot keep its current culture and style and expect different results in terms of demographics. I am also unsure that the present congregation (as a whole) would be open to the kind of change that might be involved that brings in young families, which opens the potential for conflict. The pastor cannot fix the perceived omissions and weaknesses without the support of the congregation.*

*Otherwise, St. John's could continue to do what it already does well with its ministry to and with the demographic in the pews.*