

Northbrook Presbyterian Church

Congregational Self Study

January 2010

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Introduction

Called by the Nominating Committee and representing the membership of Northbrook Presbyterian Church, the Self Study Committee met between August 2009 and January 2010 to:

- gather information regarding the church's mission, vision and place in the community, through the use of questionnaires, small group gatherings, the PerceptGroup reports and PC(USA) resources;
- prayerfully consider all the information generated during the self study process; and,
- write a report to be approved by the Congregational Life Ministry Team of the Presbytery of Detroit and our session and shared with the congregation as we begin the transition to call a new pastor.

The Self Study Committee used the *Pastoral Search Inventory* from the Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut to survey all members of the congregation. Small group gatherings were held following both worship services on October 4 to discuss the answers to the following questions:

- What do you think is special about this congregation?;
- The church's purpose is to Live the Love of Jesus Christ. What does this mean to you?;
- What do you think the focus should be for Northbrook Presbyterian Church for the next 5 years?;
- If you had a one on one with the new pastor, what would you discuss?; and,
- Do you have anything you would like to share that has not yet been addressed in the previous questions or the questionnaire?

The Report follows the format set out by the Presbytery of Detroit Congregational Life Team in their hand-out "What Makes a Terrific Congregational Self Study?".

We are grateful to The Reverend Philip Reed from the Presbytery of Detroit Congregational Life Team for guidance in our approach to the Self Study. We are also grateful to the many church members who provided valuable input for this report.

We, the Self Study Committee, feel that the following report fairly represents a picture of the church without bias or personal agenda. Within the pages, you will find marvelous evidence of the commitment and faithfulness of this congregation.

Faithfully,

Kim Bowden-Adair, Chair, Barb Burnham, Jerry Lein, Bill Travis, Donna Young, Anne Schaefer (Interim Pastor) and Sherrill Heinrichs (Ad-Hoc Member)

Study Phase – Where Are We Now?

Part 1: History and Facts

A Brief History of Northbrook

The congregation held its first service on September 29, 1957, in the Northbrook School, in Southfield. Most of the people present came from the Woodward Avenue Presbyterian Church. Northbrook was officially organized on October 16, 1960, with 183 charter members and 200 children. The original vision for the church was to have a “congregation nurtured in its spiritual growth through its ministry and programming and active in mission and outreach as a community of faith beyond our own walls.”

The congregation moved into a building of its own at 21100 West 12 Mile Road, Southfield, in February 1962. In the fall of 1967, Congregation Beth Achim, a Jewish congregation, requested permission to use the church for a celebration. This eventually led to their purchase of the facility. Our congregation was home hunting once again.

Land was purchased at the corner of Fourteen Mile and Lahser Roads where a new building was completed and dedicated on October 26, 1969. The Northbrook Nursery School was established in 1969 as a service to the community. It is now a non-profit, non-sectarian, state-licensed pre-school. A Choir Room was added in January 1973. During the Twentieth Anniversary Sunday service on October 19, 1980 Northbrook burned its mortgage. During our 25th anniversary celebration it was stated that we are thankful to our pastors who have “challenged and inspired us, baptized us, taught us, married us, buried some of our loved ones, while always holding in front of us the grace and loving kindness of Jesus Christ and God, the Father.”

Through the years there has been a strong staff to support the programs and ministries of the church including; Pastors, Music Directors, Christian Educators, Associate Pastors, Youth Directors, a Director of Administration and Director of Adult Ministries, Nursery School Directors and staff, church secretaries and caretakers.

The church adopted a guiding principle for the congregation in 1998 that has become the foundation of Northbrook’s ministries: *Live the Love of Jesus Christ*. Two different styles of worship were implemented in 1998; a less formal contemporary Presbyterian service with a Praise Team and a traditional style of Presbyterian service with hymns and organ. These two services continue today.

In 2001, Northbrook became a LOGOS program church with emphasis on building relationships between people of all ages as we: practice the Biblical norms of caring, sharing, cooperation and non-competition; participate in worship through singing, drama and service; have fun in recreation together; and enjoy delicious meals prepared by volunteers from throughout the congregation.

Created through the vision and hard work of a core group of families, Northbrook today is a caring congregation striving to *Live the Love of Jesus Christ*.

History of Pastors

Northbrook began as a new church development in 1957. In October 1960, the church was organized as an Ecclesiastical Body with 183 charter members led by the organizing pastor, Rev. William Downey, who served three years.

In February 1964, Rev. LeRoy Peterson was called as pastor. He had a 14-year tenure and grew the membership to 1200 members. Various assistant and associate pastors served during Rev. Peterson's leadership, including Dr. Donald Muench, Rev. Jeff Goldsmith, Rev. Ernest Dunn, Rev. Alan Bethea, and Rev. Robert Brightman.

From December 1979 until December 1992, Rev. Michael Dunkelberger served as Northbrook's third head pastor. His 13 years of leadership saw a large active congregation. Rev. Peter Moore served as Associate Minister from 1981 until 1992.

During the interim period following Rev. Dunkelberger's departure, the membership dropped sharply and the rolls were further culled. Rev. Dr. R. Bruce Meyer was called in May 1994 to serve as Northbrook's fourth pastor. Dr. Meyer served the congregation for six years. Rev. James McCracken served as Assistant Pastor from 1992 until 1995, and the Rev. Jennifer Saad served as needed following Rev. McCracken's departure.

The Rev. Dr. Michael P. Burns was called as our fifth pastor, serving seven years, from August 2002 until July 2009. During "Mick's" time at Northbrook the church was updated to be handicapped accessible, the kitchen was renovated and current technology was put in place.

The Rev. Anne Schaefer was called as the Interim Pastor in July 2009.

Membership Statistics and Trends

Membership (adult) has declined over the last ten years from 774 on 12/31/98 to 515 on 12/31/08 or by about 34%. See separate reporting on Sunday school, Youth Groups, Addition and Deletion Patterns, and Age & Gender Profiles.

Northbrook's 2008 ending membership of 515 exceeded the average PC(USA) of 200. Northbrook's 34% member reduction over the past ten years significantly exceeds the PC(USA) average of an approximate 17% reduction over the same period.

Worship Attendance Statistics and Trends

Adult Sunday services attendance has declined over the last ten years from 280 average weekly attendance in 1999 to 184 in 2008 or by about 35%, which is similar to the same ten year 34% decline in membership.

Attendance as a percentage of membership has varied from 35% in 1999 to 36% in 2008 with a high in 2003 at 54% and a low of 34% in 2000.

Northbrook 2008 average weekly attendance at 184 significantly exceeded the average PC(USA) at 111. While Northbrook's attendance over the last ten years has reduced by about 35%, the PC(USA) average worship attendance, unlike membership, has remained relatively stable. Attendance as a percentage of membership at Northbrook at 36% falls well below the PC(USA) average of 52%. Perhaps Northbrook's relative low attendance ratio is due to the large count of out of state residents, winter snow birds traveling to warm winter climes, cottage commuters going up-north in summer and a generally very active membership.

Sunday School Membership and Attendance Trends

There is one Adult Bible Class that meets on Sunday morning. The attendance in that class has remained stable at between 10-20 persons. This class is made up of predominantly of older adults.

The attendance shows a decline over the past ten years in the preschool through fifth grade age groups as we have not had young families joining the church, sports events being held on Sunday mornings, families with cottages away from the area and divorced families who share custody every other weekend.

KIDS' Connection, our style of Sunday School, is held on Sunday mornings year-round for 3 year olds through 5th graders. At the present time on our rolls there are 18 very active children who attend regularly, 7 who attend moderately. That is the entire population in these age groups for all members of the congregation except for friends and visitors who attend periodically.

Our LOGOS program held on Wednesdays from 4:30 – 7:30 has excellent regular weekly attendance with member as well as non-member's children involved. This program also includes a Bible study component.

Youth in grades 6 – 12 do not have a Sunday school component as part of their program.

Youth Group Membership and Attendance Trends

Seven Mid-Highs meet on Monday evening for Bible study and recreation and eight youth are part of the LOGOS program that also includes a Bible study component, and meets on

Wednesday evenings. (There are five Mid-Highs on our rolls who are not involved in these programs.) The Senior Highs include approximately twenty youth that meet on Sunday evening for Bible study and recreation. Eight Senior High youth are part of the LOGOS program for dinner and Bible study in the evening on Wednesdays.

Attendance has been about this number for the past eight years with friends attending at differing rates depending upon the event.

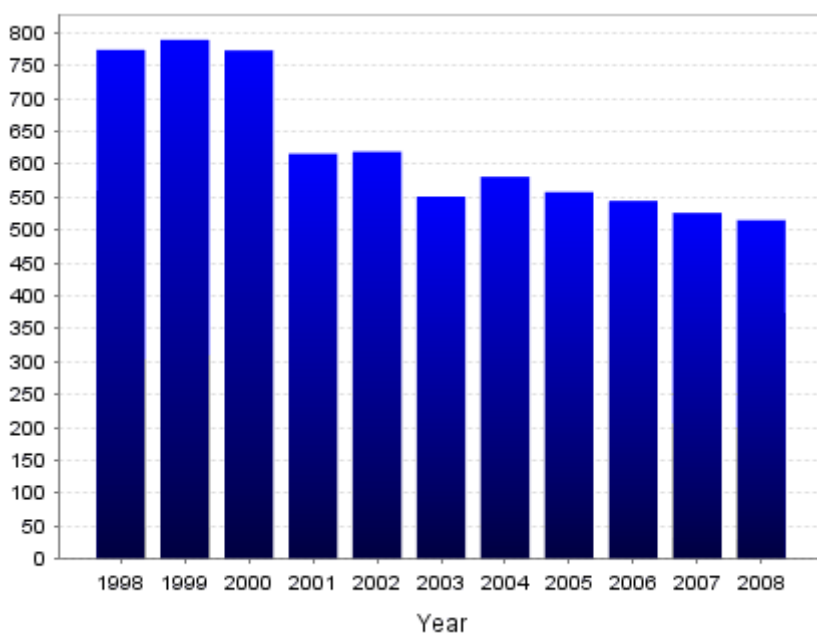
The children and youth in these programs are enthusiastic and involved. The LOGOS program includes our confirmation class for 8th graders.

Membership Addition and Deletion Patterns

As previously noted, membership (adult) has declined over the last ten years from 774 on 12/31/98 to 515 on 12/31/08 or by 259 members or about 34%. The net 259 member reduction is comprised of 269 gains and 528 losses. The gains came from 183 by profession of faith, 73 certificates of transfer (in) and 13 other. The losses came from 84 certificates of transfer (out), 71 deaths and 373 other. The significant number of “other” losses of 373 comes mostly from annually reviewing and culling the membership rolls, with session approval.

The overall trend since 1998 has been one of declining gains for PCUSA churches. For the past 10 years Northbrook’s losses have exceeded gains except for 3 years (1999, 2002, 2004).

Changes in membership result from the difference between new members added (membership gains) and current members subtracted (membership losses). The highest membership year in the last ten years was 1999 and statistics show a decline since that time.



Age and Gender Profiles of Members

The current Northbrook congregation consists of 507 members. (Fall 2009)

There are 290 females and 217 males.

Of the 290 females, there are 12 for whom we have no birthdates, and the average age of the remainder is 54.7, the oldest being 96.

We have 217 males. We have 4 for whom we have no birthdates. Their average age is 52.6 with the oldest being 94. The following chart excludes those with missing birthdates.

Age	Females		Males		Total	
18-29	64	23%	54	26%	118	24%
30-49	34	12%	28	13%	62	13%
50-64	67	24%	51	24 %	118	24%
>65	113	41%	80	37%	193	39%
Total	278	100%	213	100%	491	100%

Participation Level in Church Activity

Approximately 40% of those on the church rolls are involved in church activities beyond worship. One hundred twenty-four members regularly serve on church committees, including 20 Elders and nine Deacons, with additional volunteers serving for specific events or on ad hoc committees. The Sunday morning Bible class draws 10-20 people. The Wednesday morning and evening Bible studies average ten and four participants, and occasional one-time studies draw several others. Aside from attending Sunday worship, members participate in church activities in varying degrees.

Northbrook members support our various mission projects with both volunteer time and financial contributions. Many provide gifts for the angel tree at Christmas and support the alternative gift market that aids third world cottage industries, Presbyterian projects, local missions and individuals. Approximately 30 people have been the core group for our hands-on outreach to Habitat for Humanity’s Blitz Build, Westminster’s monthly soup kitchen, Detroit Fort Street Presbyterian’s outreach to the homeless, Second Mile Center in Detroit, and Katrina relief work crews. Many more support these efforts with funding. Nearly 100 volunteers work in some capacity when Northbrook hosts the South Oakland Shelter for a week. Between 18 and 24 seniors come to the twice monthly *Souper Senior Supper* for fellowship and a delicious meal.

Thirty to 50 attend the special luncheons offered by Presbyterian Women, and new interest has come from their FUN group that has met at restaurants and homes and organized events like movies and ball games. A morning circle with ten members meets Tuesday mornings. The congregation supports the PWN Ingathering (supplies donated to mission

in the United States and abroad) as well as Church Women United's drives for health kits and school supplies. The Men's Connection meets Thursday mornings with an attendance of 21. The Monday evening Adult Focus group offers varied programming that draws 12 to 22 participants. Eight to fifteen women enjoy the knitting group that contributes items for the alternative gift market.

The Congregational Life Committee hosts several events throughout the year. 2009 events included a St. Patrick Day dinner with Irish dancers, a soup tasting dinner, a Christmas season dinner and carol sing, a special celebration for the pastor's 25 years in ministry, a Mexican fiesta farewell party, etc. These events draw between 80 and 150. The CLC also prepares funeral luncheons that use between five and ten volunteers and coordinates the regular Sunday morning coffee hour volunteers. Nearly 100 members actively participate in the garage sale, creating fun, fellowship and funds for church projects.

As for youth involvement, 35 to 50 have participated in study, mission and fun events for mid and senior high throughout the year. The youth director has 13 volunteers who chaperone activities like mission work camp, church camp (a combined event with Orchard United Methodist Church), and special outings. Thirty children participated in camp. The Wednesday evening LOGOS program draws 47 children and approximately 49 adult volunteers over the year. Vacation Bible School involves 15 individuals. Our pre-school serves nearly 60 children of both member and neighborhood families.

Tenure

The average tenure for our membership is 18.8 years, while the median is 14.75. For the women, the average is 19.31 and the median is 15.63. For the men, it is 18.8 and 14.75.

Geographical Location of Members in Relation to Church Location

Northbrook Church is located on the northern boundary of Beverly Hills, Michigan at 22055 W. 14 Mile Road, on the corner with Lahser Road. Membership totaled 515 at the end of 2008.

Approximately 71% or 365 members live within 5 miles of the church, principally in the municipalities of Beverly Hills and the Bloomfield's. Another 21 % or 110 members live between 6 and 25 miles from the church, principally in Farmington Hills to the west and Troy to the east. Beyond that, 8% or 40 members live greater than 25 miles from the church, including 29 out of state.

Geographical Location of Members

Dec. 31, 2009		Distance in Miles	#	%
Beverly Hills	MI	2	125	24.3%
Bingham Farms	MI	2	23	4.5%
Franklin	MI	3	3	0.6%
Birmingham	MI	4	30	5.8%
Southfield	MI	4	40	7.8%
Bloomfield	MI	5	107	20.8%
Lathrup Village	MI	5	22	4.3%
West Bloomfield	MI	5	15	2.9%
Michigan < 5 Mi			365	70.9%
Michigan 6 to 25 miles			110	21.4%
Michigan over 25 Miles			11	2.1%
Out of State			29	5.6%
Total Members			515	100.0%

Facilities Assessment and Overview

Built in 1969, Northbrook Presbyterian Church is located on 9.4 acres on the Southwest corner of 14 Mile Road and Lahser Road in Beverly Hills, Michigan. The church is a well-maintained 20,769 square foot brick structure with New England style architecture. A new roof was recently completed on the flat part of the church, and funding is in place to cover a complete redo in ten years, effectively giving us 20 years of coverage. A Moller Opus pipe organ was installed in 1987 and upgraded in 1997. There is a columbarium behind the sanctuary. The library was totally refurbished in 2002 and provides a warm, inviting environment for meetings and study. New technology has been installed throughout the building—sound and projector systems in the sanctuary, flat panel screens in the hallway to provide information and current activity photos, video capability for Fellowship Hall, and wireless internet capability throughout. In 2008 the kitchen was completely remodeled to commercial code and certified by the health department. This member-designated gift provides an attractive and efficient setting for food preparation. Some of the offices have also been updated. Northbrook operates a preschool on site with a fenced play area in the adjoining yard. The asphalt parking lots have spaces for 195 cars.

The property also has a 4,230 square foot house for youth activities, with an apartment that may be used by a youth director. An adjacent garden area is used for outdoor worship. A 248 square foot shed and a 671 square foot garage complete the storage areas to the rear of the church building.

To the west side of the church stands a 2,842 square foot, two-story home with attached garage, which has served as both manse and rental property.

On the North side of the church is a newly completed labyrinth and meditation garden. The labyrinth was dedicated on October 25, 2009.

The church is handicapped accessible with pew space set aside for wheelchairs, a restroom in the main building for handicapped members and guests and a wheelchair ramp making the Youth House accessible also. There are handicapped accessible doorways on the center doors of the church. Since the main building is one story, wheelchairs and walkers easily navigate it.

The church currently has no debt on any of its facilities.

Financial Assessment – Trends in Giving 10 Years

The following discussion will deal only with envelope, loose and special contributions all credited to the annual operating budget. Excluded from the discussion are endowment, memorial, major renovation, preschool and Presbyterian Women receipts as well as fees and rents, interest income, per capita income and other miscellaneous operating incomes.

Ten year contributions have increased from \$558,708 in 1999 to \$613,057 in 2008 or by about 10%. Contributions per **member** have increased somewhat steadily from \$708 to \$1,190 or by 68% over the same period. Contributions per **attende**e have increased somewhat steadily from \$1,995 to \$3,332 by a similar 67%. Each fall the church organizes a Stewardship Campaign to help set the operating budget for the following year by obtaining pledges from as many giving units in the congregation as possible. The nature of the pledge drive is by pulpit and literature contact with no house visitations since 1993. The latest five year number of contributor units averaged 257 with 184 of them pledging and the remaining 73 giving units choosing not to pledge.

In addition to local giving, Northbrook participates and encourages all five special offerings supported by PC(USA).

Principally due to its larger size, Northbrook contributions at \$613,057 exceeded the 2008 \$240,296 average for all PC(USA) congregations. Northbrook's 2008 contribution per **member** at \$1,190 exceeded the PC(USA) average of \$1,109 by 7%. Northbrook's 2008 contribution per **attende**e at \$3,332 exceeded the PC(USA) average of \$2,175 by 53%, principally due to Northbrook's lower (36% vs. 52%) attendance to membership ratio than the average PC(USA) ratio.

Financial Assessment – Budget Trends 10 Years

The following discussion will deal only with expenses charged to the annual operating budget. Excluded from the discussion are endowment, memorial, major renovation, preschool and Presbyterian Women expenses.

In late fall the session sets a breakeven operating budget based on an estimate of total revenues, including pledges from the Stewardship Campaign. While committees attempt to adhere to their budgets and to adhere to the notion of balancing current year actual total revenue and expenses, prudent spending is the watchword. Prudent maintenance of assets and safety overshadow balancing the budget and accordingly some years will see excess expenses over revenue. Deficit spending is supported by bank account reserves.

Ten year operating expenses have increased from \$588,212 in 1999 to \$632,667 in 2008 or by about 8%. Expenses have been partially contained through efficiency and technology. An endowment initiative was begun in 2000 to fund building maintenance and reduce the strain on the operating budget but through 2008 the endowment has not been sufficient to fund building maintenance. As a percent of total operating expenses, over the ten years, each of the budget categories have held closely to the same % ratio to total spent. Mission giving from the operating budget is pegged at 10% of contributions. In addition, \$60,000 or 10% of a 2008/2009 special bequest was given to The Mission Connection Committee to use for special mission projects.

Cumulatively over the past ten years, expenses have exceeded all revenues for a net deficit of \$26,599, with six of those years in surplus and the remaining four years in deficit.

Part 2: The Community

The committee used the PerceptGroup for our statistics, examining 12 zip codes where the majority of our congregation resides.

What Our Community is Like

Approximately 71% or 365 members live within 5 miles of the church, principally in the municipalities of Beverly Hills and the Bloomfields. These affluent communities are located about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour northwest of Detroit, Michigan. These and the surrounding communities provide excellent education, culture, performing arts, professional sports and dining opportunities. Many parks, small lakes and dedicated facilities mark our landscape, providing great venues for recreation and leisure. In our immediate area, the zoning is mostly residential with some commercial and light industry. While winters may be somewhat frosty, we love our four distinct seasons.

Demographic Trends in the Community- 10 year

- Population — The population in our community has decreased 1.9% since 2000 and is projected to decrease an additional 1.3% by 2014. The current population is 221,000.
- Race — In the next five years, the Anglo population is projected to decrease from 75.7% to 71.8% of the total. The African-American population is expected to increase to 15.4%, the *Hispanic-Latino* to 1.9% and the *Asian/Other* to 10.9%. If we include that piece of the community where we are under-represented, the numbers are 59.7%, 28.5%, 1.8% and 10% respectively.
- Age — The community exceeds the national norms in the 45 and above age brackets and is below in the 0 to 44 brackets. The Average Age in 2000 was 40, in 2009 it was 41.6, and in 2014 it is projected to be 42.5. The Median Age is increasing at a faster rate, going from 40.8 in 2000 to 45.4 projected in 2014.
- Income — Our community is located in a very affluent area. The Median Household income in 2000 was \$81,800, \$88,200 in 2009, and projected to be \$92,100 in 2014. In the \$75,000 and up range, the study area exceeds the National Norm by an average of 10%, is about normal in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 bracket and is below the norm in the \$49,999 and below bracket.
- Marital Status — Our community closely follows the national averages for Single (23.2%), Married (60.8%) and Divorced/Widowed (16.0%).
- Family Size-The Average Number of Persons per Household is 2.4, compared to the U.S. Average of 2.6.

What Our Community Economic Overview is Like

Our community lies in the southeast corner of Oakland County, Michigan. The dominant industry in the surrounding area is automotive, either directly or in support. The following statistics are for this county, as prepared by the Institute for Research on Labor, Employment, and the Economy, University of Michigan. Compared to a total 672,369 employment roll in 2008, estimated job losses total 25,240 for '08-'09, 10,572 for '09-'10 and a near breakeven at 213 gain in '10-'11. Unemployment rates are expected to climb from 7.1% in 2008 to 11.1% in 2009 and 11.6% in 2011.

The Ministry Area Profile prepared by the PerceptGroup, Inc. for our community shows that only 3,212 or 3.5% of total households live below the poverty line, less than a third of the USA national rate. The overall religious giving potential is described as *extremely high*.

What is the racial breakdown of your community?

Among the individual groups, *Anglos* represent 76% of the population, considerably higher than the national average of 65%. The *African-American* population accounts for 13% and is projected to be the fastest growing group in our community. *Asian* and other represents 9.7% of the population and *Hispanic* 1.7%.

If we take into account a geographic area immediately south of the church where we have few members and was not included in our “community”, the numbers change to 64% *Anglos*, 25% *African-Americans* and with *Asians* projected as being the fastest growing group.

What is the dominant lifestyle of your Community?

Lifestyle diversity in the area is high, with 30 of the 50 US Lifestyle segments used in the study represented. *Affluent* families account for 54% of the households, followed by 26% representing the *Young and Coming* and 15% representing *Middle American Families*.

What Our Community Church Attendance is Like

The Precept profile report for 2009 estimate for our community states, “Overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is about average when compared to national averages.” In addition the report shows that our community is about equally spread between being 1) strongly involved in their faith; 2) somewhat involved in their faith; and 3) not involved with their faith. Finally, about the same percentage of persons have increased as have decreased in their faith involvement in the last ten years.

The 2009 estimated religious preference for our community shows; Catholic 31%, not interested and no preference 12%, Methodist 11%, Lutheran 9%, Presbyterian 8%, Baptist 7%, non-denominational 6%, Judaism 4% and other 12%, each being under 3%.

Worship style estimated for 2009 for our community shows that 24% prefer emotionally uplifting, 15% prefer intellectually challenging, 41% prefer both emotionally uplifting and intellectually challenging and 20% had no preference or not interested. In addition 27% prefer traditional/formal/ceremonial, 25% prefer contemporary/informal, 28% prefer both traditional and contemporary while 20% had no preference or not interested.

Music style estimated for 2009 for our community shows that 30% prefer traditional, 20% prefer contemporary, 31% prefer both traditional and contemporary while 19% had no preference or not interested.

How many churches are in the Community you serve?

Based on the Percept interactive map, there are 48 churches within 5 miles of the church. This number appears to be remaining fairly constant. This does not count the temples and synagogues in the area.

What is the Pattern of Non-denominational Churches in the area and what are they doing to serve their congregations and community?

There are several mega-churches that have sprouted up near Northbrook in the past ten to fifteen years. These churches are designed to reach out to the unchurched or seekers. They ordinarily begin in a school auditorium and after there is significant growth they build their own facility. Most of these buildings do not look like traditional churches nor do they have symbols that have historically been associated with the Christian Church (i.e. crosses, stained glass windows). Although the mission of many of these churches is to reach the unchurched, studies show that many of those who attend them have switched their allegiances from mainline denominational churches. For those who have been asked why they switched, the response varies, but a theme seems to be that people want to feel good about who they are and be fully centered in Christ.

The closest seeker church to Northbrook is Kensington, which has in addition to its main campus developed several satellite campuses, one of which is located two miles from Northbrook.

Part 3: The Congregation**Current Conditions of our Congregation**

Our congregation is in good health. The information we gathered indicated that the majority of members are very satisfied with their church life. In other words, there were no big surprises for the Self Study Committee.

Worship is at the center of Northbrook's life together. The church has two worship services presented in two unique styles. The 9:30 is an informal, more contemporary service in terms of music and dress and presentation, while the 11:00 is a traditional service with more formal dress and use of the organ and chancel choir.

We have, as most churches do, a diverse body of members who have strong feelings about their church and how it functions. In the small group gatherings there were some concerns raised regarding the two worship styles, music at those services, the perceived difficulty getting to know people from the "other" service, a desire to see a single blended service, and strong preferences for a particular worship service style.

The committee has looked long and hard at all the information we received from members of the congregation, and we can say without equivocation, that this congregation has a very strong preference for two distinct worship services, one traditional in nature and one contemporary in nature, to meet the needs of a diverse group of worshipers. Members would like to see both services strengthened and energized, particularly in the area of music, as they believe that the music and the sermon are keys to the success of each.

Now it is imperative that members of the congregation come together, unified in the understanding that the majority of the members are happy with our worship choices as they are. Now is the time for us to look past our worship differences and whole-heartedly support the church's belief that it is an asset to have two different worship styles from which to choose. Certainly we will need to focus on ways to help members from each service get to know one another on a deeper level; provide through newsletters, minutes for mission and general conversation an understanding and support for each style of service, bringing a sense of peace to the church in terms of worship; make both services the best that they can be as we gather together as the body of Christ at Northbrook; and hopefully grow the church as our energy, enthusiasm and unity are felt by visitors to our congregation.

It was clear from the self study that our guiding principle, *Live the Love of Jesus Christ*, is embraced by the congregation and is the foundation of our ministry and mission. We are a caring and compassionate congregation, always ready to offer a helping hand, a meal prepared with love, a message of hope.

We are a healthy congregation, but we still tend to think in terms of a 1300 member congregation that we were in 1992. We provide programs and ministries at that rate. We are a busy church with lots going on throughout the week as well as on Sundays. This makes for a very busy Pastor and staff. Members traditionally expect the pastor to be present for all the programs at the church.

We need to learn to be understanding and respectful of the decisions that staff make regarding their allocation of time: time away for renewal, both with family and for study; as well as scheduling of programs and committee involvement. We need to be aware of the importance of nurturing the pastor and his family. We have a very strong group of Deacons who are very able to work with the pastor in the area of visitation.

In the small group gatherings, some of our members expressed a longing for "the good old days" when we were 1300 members. We need to accept the fact that this probably will not recur. According to the PerceptGroup data predictions, the area we serve will be declining in population through 2014. A perception expressed in the gatherings is that we are a small church. It is difficult for the congregation to think of themselves as a large congregation when our church is compared to the demographics of other Presbyterian churches. We are located between two very large Presbyterian churches and mega churches of other denominations so we tend to think of ourselves as small.

We are a congregation whose median age is in the fifties, with 195 persons above the age of 65. This is difficult for a congregation as it sees its membership slipping away and pews emptying. Northbrook has fewer people in the 25-40 age categories with the majority of our 18-29 year olds still in high school and college. A large number of our members have been here 20 years or more. There are not as many families; however those who are on the rolls are active and their children and youth are involved in the programs provided for their age groups. Wishing to draw more young adults, 25-40 year olds and families with

children, we will have to have a group prepared to research what these age groups' interests are in relation to their faith, in order to provide opportunities that meet their needs.

Feedback from the members regarding why they remain at Northbrook is that they have friends here. We need to make every effort to provide more opportunities to get to know one another in order to build these relationships. As we get to know one another, perhaps this will encourage those who are not actively involved in the church to participate more. According to the Percept data, 44% of church program preferences for people in our area is most likely to be recreational. These would include cultural programs (art, drama, music); sports, camp and day school.

Northbrook is a handicap accessible, debt-free, well-maintained facility. We are a one story church that is very accommodating. We also have a defibrillator and people who are trained to use it. Hearing assistance devices as well as areas of the sanctuary suitable for wheel chair accessibility are available for worship. There is a handicap restroom off the main hallway. We have a state of the art commercial kitchen, lovely outside areas including a new labyrinth, and a warm and inviting library, as well as classroom space and a large fellowship hall and youth house. We have top of the line technology in place. We need to continue to train members and staff on how to use it most effectively.

The Northbrook Preschool is a state licensed, community outreach program of education for young children. It has an outstanding reputation in the community and we have many children of parents who attended our preschool years ago.

The two marketing tools that are recognized by the community as uniquely Northbrook are the red wristbands imprinted with our guiding principle, *Live the Love of Jesus Christ* and our sign on the corner of the property. The wristbands stimulate conversation with others outside the church and open opportunities for faith discussions, while our sign and its messages encourage thought and discussion as well as communicate the events happening at the church

Where we are as a Congregation

Northbrook is a healthy congregation reaching out with the good news of Jesus Christ, testifying through our words and our lives, actively sharing the good news of God's grace in Jesus Christ, regularly participating in worship that is Presbyterian in nature but different in style, welcoming the visitor, being responsive to the needs of our community and beyond, showing compassion to those in need and supporting mission throughout the world.

What are the Most Important 5 Conclusions you Draw from your Data?

Northbrook has it all: a great congregation of all ages whose guiding principle in their lives is to *Live the Love of Jesus Christ*, worship that is meeting the spiritual needs of the people, a beautiful building and grounds, a strong education program for all ages, a debt-free facility, a committed staff and members that are actively engaged in the programs and ministries of the church. And, it's one of the best-kept secrets around!

We are a congregation believing in one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism and one message of grace and love...celebrated in two distinctly different styles of worship. Each service is Presbyterian in nature and includes prayer, music, Bible reading and a sermon based upon scripture, participation in the Sacraments, a time of personal response/offering and a sharing of community concerns. One service is more informal with contemporary music and informal dress and presentation, while the other is more formal with traditional music and a more traditional Presbyterian feeling. These two services meet the needs of the congregation as the **people joyfully praise God as one church in two ways.**

It is important for us to continue and expand the very strong **senior ministry** that we have, looking for ways to involve more seniors from the community in the life of the church by providing transportation and invitations. With growth in the ages of 50-85+ over the next five years, this is a group of people who want to attend church but have difficulty getting here.

We need to make every effort to provide more opportunities to **get to know one another** more deeply in order to build the kind of relationships that keep people active and fulfilled as church members.

Our focus for the next five years will be on **worship, education and growth** as a congregation both in number and in spirit. These are vital to the future of the church.

Discernment Phase – Who is God calling us to become?

Part 4: Our Vision for Northbrook

We envision Northbrook as a vibrant mixed generational church that responds to the needs of all segments of its congregation as well as to the needs within the community. We will help all we serve to be enriched spiritually, physically, and socially. Northbrook Presbyterian Church is a Christian congregation committed to providing love, fellowship and spiritual growth. Together we celebrate God's blessings through worship and service, communicating God's love in word and deed. Through activities that educate and inform, we empower all to share their talents in the life and work of Christ's Church.

"Live the Love of Jesus Christ" is recognized as Northbrook's purpose statement, vision, motto and identity. It serves as the guiding principle that expresses the spirit and purpose

of the ministry of Northbrook Presbyterian Church. "Everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

Our focus for the next five years should center on church growth, worship and education. These three areas are vital to the continuation of the congregation known as Northbrook Presbyterian Church.

We reviewed the many diverse existing ministries at Northbrook that serve our congregation, our immediate community, neighboring Detroit and international missions. These ministries need our time and talent as well as financial support. Many times the needy within our congregation can best be served by a kind ear, an extended hand or a casserole dinner. Sixty percent of the questionnaire respondents believe "Members help each other out in times of trouble." We believe that we are a "welcoming, warm and caring people, fun loving and joyful, educationally strong and caring with an excellent, competent church staff." We are proud of our mission participation, which includes a ten percent mission tithing from our operating budget and all other gifts.

Our community profile shows a more stable economic view than the nation as a whole. We have significantly less worries over day-to-day financial matters, finding affordable housing or providing adequate food. Alternatively, versus the national average, our community profile shows greater concern for finding/providing aging parent care, finding time for recreation/leisure and achieving a fulfilling marriage. Finally the community profile shows 19% of the households are primarily concerned with finding companionship, 11% with finding a good church and 9% finding spiritual teaching.

Our vision is that as we "*live the love of Jesus Christ,*" we must continue to address the needs of the larger community as best we can, but also find more ways to minister to the identified needs of our immediate community. A skilled pastor will guide each member and the congregation as a whole toward this vision.

Part 5: Our Mission for Northbrook

Northbrook's Session approved the following mission statements, based on our core values and principles:

Northbrook Presbyterian Church is a Christian community committed to providing love, fellowship and spiritual growth. Together we celebrate God's blessings through worship and service, communicating God's love in word and deed. Through activities that educate and inform, we empower all to share their talents in the life and work of Christ's Church. We will strive to be a caring, compassionate congregation, seeking first the kingdom of God, then sensing and serving the lifelong needs of the members and the community.

We examined Northbrook's existing ministries and identified the un-reached groups in our congregation and our community. Our mission direction will be to improve and expand our existing ministries to both our own people and to the community at large.

Both the church questionnaires and the community profile show that we are well educated and relatively affluent. A skilled pastor will provide the leadership to help us use our talents and resources to enhance our current ministries and develop new mission opportunities.

The congregation felt Northbrook's focus for the next five years should center on church growth, worship and education.

Church growth should center on attracting new members and also on retaining existing members. Membership diversity (age, church background, gender, etc.) is important to the Northbrook congregation and brings wisdom, tradition, innovation, and enthusiasm. Our mission to increase membership is vital to increasing stewardship to maintain our programs to serve the needs of our church and un-church community.

Although the church questionnaire showed satisfaction with the music (77% were very or generally satisfied) and worship (88% were very or generally satisfied), the Small Group participants identified enhancing both distinct worship style services as a very important focus of our worship mission.

Results indicated that Christian Education programs for all ages were all viewed as highly successful by members of the congregation. Education is a key component of a healthy church. Not only do we see education as nourishment for our souls and an agent for strengthening faith, but also as an opportunity to congregate socially.

According to the Percept study, recreation is the element that people in our area seek in terms of church. We need to provide more opportunities for members to get to know one another and to invite friends and neighbors to participate in these leisure activities as we build relationships that will encourage church involvement.

We need effective marketing to attract new members by publicizing our programs and promoting our worship services to the community. As part of Northbrook's plan of reaching out to the community in order to grow, committees of the church also need to develop ways to provide opportunities for community groups surrounding the church to use the facility as well. We need to investigate how to market and implement for church growth and incorporation of new members into the life of the congregation.

A skilled pastor will guide each member and the church as a whole toward these general mission goals, as he/she helps us develop specific plans and programs to implement them.

Part 6: Leadership – Description of Leader Needed to Achieve/Direct the Mission

Worship is a central focus for our congregation. Northbrook members are looking for a pastor who they can feel comfortable with and who has the skills to bring energy,

enthusiasm and growth in faith through our two great worship services on Sunday morning.

In order to accomplish this, the pastor will need to prepare and preach inspiring sermons that convey a biblical message that relates to our lives today, although the presentation of these sermons may be different at the two services of worship. Sermons need to be challenging and thought-provoking but do not need to contain scholarly or literary illustrations. They need to be spiritually moving and inspirational, and carefully composed and skillfully delivered. The pastor also needs to be comfortable with the use of technology in worship, making full use of the resources that Northbrook has.

The future pastor of Northbrook should be a “people person” who understands and embraces the visions and special needs of the youth as well as the seniors in the congregation.

The Pastor should be a spiritual guide with a welcoming, relaxed interpersonal style. Members want to feel comfortable sharing their faith journeys with the pastor. The pastor should be comfortable visiting the sick, shut-ins and bereaved.

Our next pastor should be Biblically literate, have a commitment to the church and its guiding principle to *Live the Love of Jesus Chris*, and have the administrative skills to work effectively with our staff.

The respondents to the survey described the essential or very essential characteristics of our Pastor as follows:

- Preparing and preaching inspiring sermons 98%
- Planning and leading worship sensitive to the needs of the congregation 96%
- Minister of the Word/Teacher of the Congregation 88%
- Friend/Fellow Traveler 83%
- Administrative leadership 80%
- Pastoral counseling 80%
- Visiting sick, shut-in and/or bereaved 80%
- Emphasis on spiritual development 79%
- Spiritual Guide 76%
- New member recruitment 76%
- Developing and supporting religious education in children and youth 74%
- Directly involve laity in planning and leadership of programs 68%
- Counselor/Healer 60%

The following indicates the traits of a good pastor that respondents preferred. The bold text indicates the choices of the congregation:

- **New approaches and ideas** vs Does things as they have always been done
- **Relaxed interpersonal style** vs Formal interpersonal style
- Reflective and reserved vs **Outgoing and socially engaging**
- **Helps people figure out for themselves** vs Advises people what to do
- Works hard to accomplish tasks vs **Places feelings of others ahead of achieving goals**
- **Maintains a private life** vs Gives whole self to church

These are the traits of a good Pastor that were equally preferred by the congregation:

- Expertise in Biblical and theological matters vs Emphasis on spiritual development and growth
- Thought-provoking and challenging vs Comforting and reassuring
- Biblical preaching and teaching vs Preaching and teaching on contemporary issues
- Strong and decisive decision-maker vs Encourages lay decision-making

The following comments from our Small Group Gatherings provide more insight as to important characteristics of our next Pastor:

- Be a strong leader but also compassionate
- Be willing to support both a contemporary service as well as a traditional service
- Available as a counselor when needed
- Participate in church activities
- Be able to involve children and youth as part of the services
- Be able to encourage the development/enhancement of the music program for both services
- Keep the traditions of the Presbyterian Church

It is important that our next Pastor be an inspirational leader of both staff and the congregation members to guide us in achieving our vision for the church. Additionally, our next Pastor needs to:

- Have excellent interpersonal skills
- Be a leader that encourages support of our missions
- Be able to bring new ideas and energy to this congregation in order to draw new members and families to our aging congregation
- Provide education to lay leaders in the congregation
- Embrace our guiding principle, "*Live the Love of Jesus Christ.*"

**WHAT IS GOD CALLING US TO DO AND HOW DO WE SEE THE
CONGREGATION FULFILLING GOD'S CALL?**

The members of Northbrook Presbyterian Church are being called to *Live the Love of Jesus Christ*. This is not always an easy way to live, but what a difference it makes! In fact it will make all the difference as we strive together to create this vibrant community of faith that we have been writing about.

In order to fulfill this call we must understand who this person, Jesus, was and what it means to *live the love of Jesus Christ*. Through education, caring ministries, mission trips, youth group retreats, worship services, relationships with one another, recreation and our next pastor, we will come to this understanding.

The Self Study Committee sees the congregation fulfilling God's call with energy, imagination, enthusiasm, commitment and love.

Everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:35