

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Corsicana, Texas

Mission Study 2020

Living and Growing in Gratitude for God's Love, Grace and Mercy.



Introduction

The Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church appointed a team to compile a Mission Study for our congregation. The purpose of this study is not only to serve as a basis for discerning the call for the Pastoral leadership, but also to gather information from the congregation for discernment for the future role of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

For the last several years, through leadership of a designated Pastor and currently, our Interim Pastor, we have had a series of congregational gatherings to share with one another our past, our present and our future. Information from these gatherings, together with prior gatherings from the New Beginnings program, a survey of the congregation and demographic data has provided the team with valuable guidance for this document.

It is our expectation that this will be a living document, to be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, and that it will provide insight to our core values and our role in this community and as prayerful disciples.

History

Westminster Presbyterian Church's history involves an amalgamation of all churches in the City of Corsicana that have borne the name Presbyterian since the year 1853. They are as follows:

- Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1853 – 1906
- First Presbyterian Church (US), 1868 – 1949
- Third Avenue Presbyterian Church (USA), 1906 – 1949
- Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, 1895 – 1908
- United Presbyterian Church, 1908 – 1935
- Bethel Mexican Presbyterian Church (US), began as a local mission of the First Presbyterian Church (US), 1930 – 1967

At one point in its history, Westminster was a federated church, belonging to both the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. With the reunion of 1983, Westminster became a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Westminster's "amalgamated" history began in 1853 with the foundation of a Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the first church in what was then known as the village of Corsicana. The church viewed its purpose as providing both spiritual and social development for the newly founded town. In 1868, the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) established a church in Corsicana, taking the name of First Presbyterian Church.

Over the next several years, both churches would purchase lots across the street from each other, one on the current site of WPC, effectively linking together their future histories. In

1906, the Cumberland Church voted to join the United Presbyterian Church in the United States (UPCUS), taking the name Third Avenue Presbyterian Church. For 42 years, both churches in their respective locations would grow and serve the community of Corsicana.

In 1948, the two churches entered into conversations that led to a federated church taking the name of Westminster Presbyterian Church. Included within this amalgamation of two Presbyterian churches was a third, the Associate Reform Presbyterian Church congregation which, in 1935 had merged with First Presbyterian Church. Thus began the building of a new church, in membership and in church building, at the present location.

One Presbyterian addition was made to the newly formed Westminster Presbyterian Church when, in 1967, members of Bethel Mexican Presbyterian Church – formerly a mission church of First Presbyterian Church – decided to merge its membership with Westminster. Consequently, since 1967 all Presbyterians were a part of one church.

With the merger in 1983 of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States (UPCUS), the federation of Westminster Presbyterian Church officially ended and the church became a member of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA).

About Corsicana

The City of Corsicana was founded in 1848 and is the county seat of Navarro County. Oil was discovered in Corsicana in 1894 and within six years 500 oil wells were operating within the city limits making it the first Texas oil boom town and one of Texas' wealthiest cities. The state's first oil refinery was built here by the Magnolia Petroleum Company (now Mobil), followed by the Texas Company (Texaco). This rich oil history is celebrated annually with the local festival, Derrick Days. Corsicana was also home to the original Wolf Brand Chili (now a ConAgra company) and remains home to Collin Street Bakery which still ships fruitcakes worldwide.

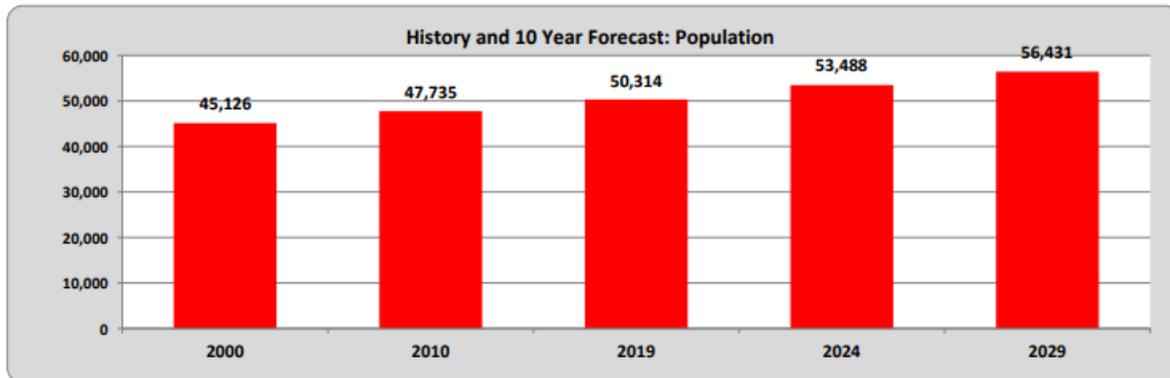


Large employers in the area include Collin Street Bakery, Corsicana Bedding, Oil City Iron Works, Guardian Industries, a Kohl's distribution Center, Russell Stover Candies, PacTiv and a True Value distribution center.

Corsicana is also home to Navarro College, a two year accredited community college with branches in surrounding communities. The college is currently receiving notoriety for its championship cheerleading squad, featured on the Netflix series, Cheer.

The estimated population of Navarro County is just over 50,000 with an expected growth of 10-12% over the next ten years.

Population History with 5 and 10 Year Projected Change



Population Trends	2000	2010	2019	2024	2029
Study Area Population	45,126	47,735	50,314	53,488	56,431
Population Change		2,609	2,579	3,174	2,943
Percent Change		5.78%	5.40%	6.31%	5.50%
State Population	20,851,809	25,145,561	29,066,677	31,532,513	34,017,719
Population Change		4,293,752	3,921,116	2,465,836	2,485,206
Percent Change		20.59%	15.59%	8.48%	7.88%

Demographics

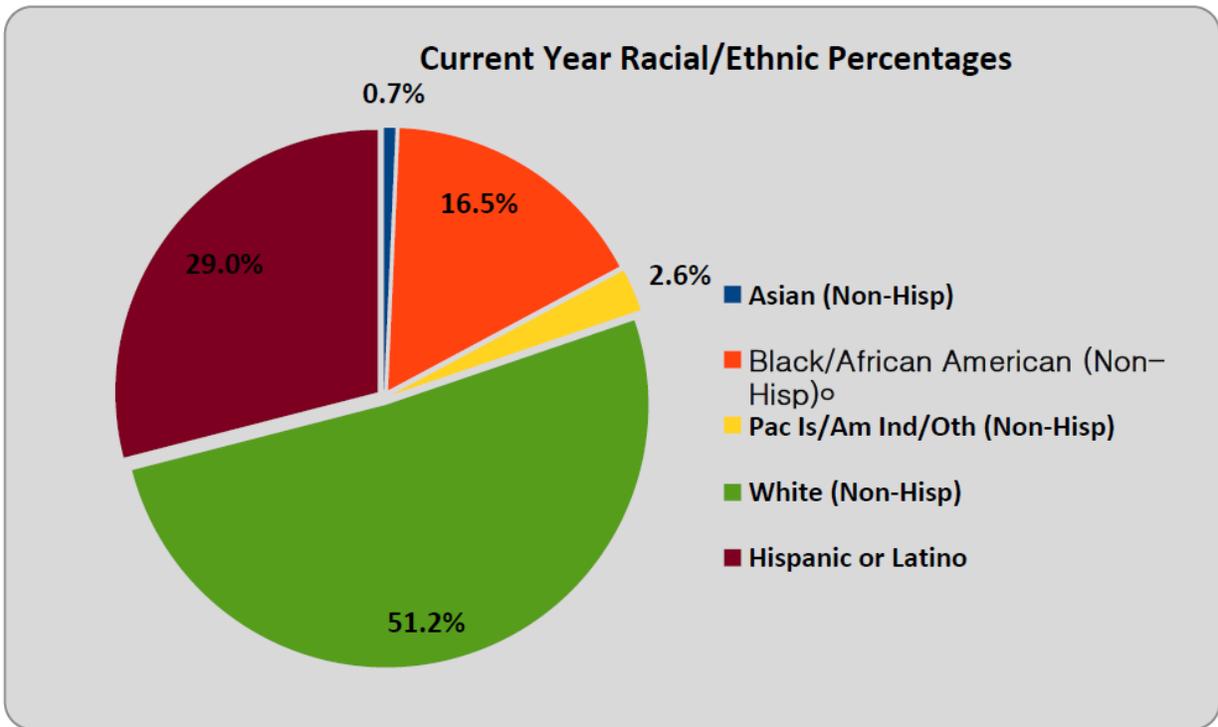
Rooted in history and growing in faith, the combination of churches was not without challenges and changes. Certainly, like traditional church organizations everywhere, membership numbers and attendance have dwindled over the last decades. After a peak of over 600 members and average worship attendance at 350, today, our official roll (which is closely maintained for active membership) is at 97 with an average of 35-40 in worship.

Using data from MissionInsites®, the population around the church location is very diverse with the top two Mosaics groups identified as “Cultural Connections” and the “Golden Year Guardians”. These groups, as defined by the Experian® Mosaic are described as:

Cultural Connections: Diverse, mid- and low-income families in urban apartments and residences with estimated household income below \$15,000 and average age between 36-45.

Golden Year Guardians: Retirees living in older homes, settled residences and estimated household incomes between \$15,000 to \$25,000.

The Racial and Ethnic breakout of the community is 51% White, 29% Hispanic and 16% Black/African American:



The congregation of Westminster is primarily made up of Golden Year Guardians with a higher percentage of White (non-hispanic), higher education levels and higher average income than the community population.

A comprehensive Mission Insite report is attached as Appendix A.

Mission and Ministry

Westminster holds a single worship service on Sunday mornings and a prayer group on Wednesday evenings. The adult study classes have been combined into one class which meets just prior to Sunday worship and the children have a study lesson during the Sermon time. The youth meet on Sunday evenings during the school year and co-host an ecumenical Vacation Bible school in the Summer.

The Presbyterian Women's circle meets on occasion and the Men's group journeys to the Men's conference at Mo-Ranch each year. A number of the women also participate in ecumenical Bible study groups in the community.

The church provides scholarships to Navarro College music students singing with our Choir and a special benevolence provides funds for Holy Week activities which include a guest lecturer, community dinners and a Maundy Thursday communion service.

Special events hosted recently include a community picnic, Halloween trunk or treat, and a photographer art exhibit benefitting a local charity.

Westminster is also home to the Child Enrichment Program (CEP) Ministry which provides child care and early learning five days a week to approximately 52 children ages 6 weeks through 5 years. The CEP ministry is funded with tuition fees and a small stipend from the church general fund. The Presbyterian Children's Home & Services (PCHAS) also employs three staff in the building with the church providing the office space and utilities and additional annual funding. This program provides counseling and parenting classes to families in crisis.

Westminster Presbyterian Church has several hands-on Mission Projects. Included are Food For Fitness, support for the United Christian Fellowship at Navarro College, and monetary donations to Habitat for Humanity, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and Christmas in Action. Additionally, we provide support to an Austin Presbyterian Seminary student and partner with other Presbyterian churches in Grace Presbytery in providing a scholarship and support for a college student from Mexico. Westminster also supports Compassion Corsicana by donating food items and monetary contributions. Our most recent mission project involves establishing a shoe closet at the intermediate school and a personal hygiene closet at the middle school.

The work and mission of the church are carried out by several Ministry Teams:

- Mission and Outreach
- Congregational Life
- Worship
- Christian Education
- House and Grounds
- Finance, Administration and Stewardship
- Personnel
- Nominating

The volunteers are supported by staff:

- Pastor (Interim, Head of Staff)
- Church Administrator
- Church Sexton
- Choir Director/Organist
- Sight and Sound Technician (part time)

The CEP program employs a Program Director and 15 teachers (some full-time, some part-time) and comes under the direction and supervision of a board of directors, the Pastor/Head of Staff

and the Session. PCHAS has three employees that office on the premises with additional counselors based in nearby offices.

The active Session is comprised of nine elders, three classes of three, plus a Clerk of Session. The Pastor serves as moderator.

The assets of the church are managed by the Board of Trustees, comprised of the moderator of the Finance, Administration and Stewardship Team, the Clerk of Session and one other Ruling Elder.

Financial Outlook

The local community prospered from another wave of oil discoveries in the mid 20th century which kept Corsicana in the top of the wealthiest per capita cities in Texas. The county now ranks near the bottom with 20% of the population below the poverty line (per U.S. Census Bureau). Westminster Presbyterian, however, is blessed to benefit from several trusts that provide income to operations over and above the congregational tithing.

The Mission Through Endowed Funds policy governs the use of endowed funds, stipulating that the donor's wishes are to be honored as closely as possible and empowering the Trustees with investment and disbursement of funds subject to oversight of the Session. The policy is written to include both current endowments and any future bequests.

Currently Endowed funds include:

- Distributions from the Bessie I. Hoffstetter Trust (WPC is one of several community beneficiaries of this fund, managed by Bank Trustees)
- The Mona Walker Trust (Sole beneficiary, disbursements managed by Bank Trustees)
- The Robert F. Davidson Trust (Sole beneficiary, held at local bank)
- Several Trusts have been combined and invested with Texas Presbyterian Foundation:
 - Thelma & Herbert C. Thorne Trust
 - Mattie K. & Mid Caston Trust
 - Margaret Miller Fund
 - Henry Walker Trust

Income from these funds provide 70-75% of the total annual budgeted income and are only marginally affected by market conditions. The combined corpus of the trusts are substantial enough to sustain the mission and operations of Westminster well into the future.

Looking towards the Future

Over the past ten years, the congregation has participated in several cycles of mission study reflection due to pastoral changes and involvement in the New Beginnings program. In those cycles, several different methods of information gathering were used – congregational gatherings, small group gatherings, individual home visits and written survey responses.

At the beginning of 2020, congregants were asked to participate in a survey to provide guidance to the Mission Study Team. The survey was mailed to members and regular visitors and included a self-addressed, stamped envelope to facilitate returning the survey. The survey was also available online. Nevertheless, only 12 questionnaires were returned, a 12% response based on membership. However that represents over 1/3 of average worship attendance - 90% of respondents indicated that they worship on a weekly basis. 92% said they were actively involved in the mission of the church. Strengths of the church were noted as friendliness, financial stability and community involvement with a few also indicating our open-mindedness to helping the community and our traditional worship services. The primary weakness mentioned was the size and age of the congregation, also noting a frequent turnover in pastoral leadership and lack of young couples and youth. Those who indicated types of change they would like to see included more youth activities, variety of music and permanent pastoral leadership. Several expressed that they did not want to change our emphasis on prayer or order of worship. The majority indicated that they are willing to personally volunteer hours per week toward making changes.

Through several listening sessions and workshops, the congregants have indicated a passion for the place Westminster Presbyterian holds in the community. The church as a whole and its members individually are needed in the community and there would be a recognized void if the church were not viable. On numerous occasions, we have sought to analyze resources and reduce the vast ministry commitments of a small congregation, yet the members rally to save those programs and continue to work tirelessly.

There is a recognized need to reach further into the community, particularly to impoverished elderly and children. Ministry to children is important for the future of the community.

Action items:

- Hosting/sponsoring community events that promote diversity, perhaps bringing in nationally recognized speakers
- Meeting with law enforcement, city officials, executives of non-profits to reach a greater understanding of the true needs of the community
- Promoting understanding of what it means to be a Presbyterian – what we believe – within the congregation and beyond

- Creating programs to assist families in their daily challenges - parenting skills, financial management, time management, legal advice, fitness – choose a path and be the go to resource for that help
- Improve online and social media outreach to provide a means for the unchurched to ask questions, submit prayer requests, access learning resources but also to better serve the congregation with their needs
- Create an affirming environment where everyone feels welcome regardless of where they are in their own personal spiritual journey and differing views are welcome and celebrated

We are open to new ideas. Our church needs leadership that will tend to our senior citizens but also attract a diverse group. We know that there are unchurched citizens that we hope to reach with the good news of Jesus Christ. The membership wants to create an environment for everyone. There are so many things we could accomplish together!



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