

Top Questions Asked by Congregants

Q: I can't help but see this as a failure of our church body. What can we do to keep this from happening again? What can we do better?

Q: Where do we go from here? We have a pastor who is leaving because of unChristian behaviors of persons in this faith community. When she leaves, will there be yelling, gossip, triangulation for our next pastors to endure? Where is the Holy Spirit in each of us—do people feel a sense of entitlement to abuse others? We need serious soul searching and healing.

A: We need to trust the process by taking advantage of the expertise of the Lombard leaders. They are giving us the tools to heal past grievances and find ways to address conflict in a meaningful manner and to achieve solutions to problems which will be a win-win for the entire Congregation. Yes, we have had failures. But Session believes this church body is willing and able to do the hard work needed for it to heal. It is very important that as many people as possible participate in the "problem solving" sessions in September and October (three in all) so that we can move toward healing and growth.

Q: I want to know the number of members we have? Years ago it was around 2,000. Due to the finances of our church—maybe we only need 2 ministers—head minister without a doctorate so can hire a new one at lower cost.

A: At the end of March 2020 when COVID hit we had 1563 members on our roll. At the end of July we had 1288 members on our roll; however, it is likely that our actual membership today would be less if we did a formal membership audit. You will likely receive a census request in the near future to help us get a more realistic picture about what our membership really is. The congregational size at the time the Mission Study is underway will determine what education and experience we are looking for in a new head pastor. The new head pastor will have to be installed so that that pastor can help us determine how many pastors we need based on what our official membership is at that time. As to the matter of salary, it is going to be imperative that the person come with a significant knowledge of systems and experience—not a person who is 4-5 years out of seminary. Such a person will be worthy of a higher salary. As a practical matter a Doctorate does not substantially increase the cost of a pastor, a more significant factor is the years of ordained service and size of the church per the salary guidelines.

Q: Is there a commitment to restore the alternative service?

A: Although our earlier service utilizes musicians who have provided wonderful contemporary guitar and keyboard music, we recognize that some members would prefer to have additional instrumentation including drums and bass guitar which would create a sound previously provided by the 1010 Band. The Lombard Interim Report noted that the Alternative Service meets the need for Spiritual Nourishment for some and that many people started to attend FPCA because of the contemporary service. There has also been a desire expressed to return to Fellowship Hall; but that would require technological and logistical enhancement which is lacking at the present time. Some of the equipment in Fellowship Hall is no longer functional, and we do not have musicians available to serve. The issues raised relative to an Alternative Service will be one of the subjects of further discussion by the Session..