

Report to session from Diversity Working Group

The Diversity Working Group began its work under the guidance of the following goal from the Long Range Plan. Please note that the vision, goals, and objectives come under the rubric of Service in the Long Range Plan.

Service

Vision

We envision a life of service that practices God's call for peace, justice and compassion toward all people and creation. We reach out to others with the good news of God's love through our actions.

Goal V. Nurture a church environment that encourages increased diversity in our members and program participants.

- 1. Develop a plan to guide our congregation's efforts to increase diversity.*
- 2. Offer special worship events to the larger community.*
- 3. Offer one or more short-term classes on special topics of interest to the larger community*

What the committee has done:

Beginning in April 2015, the committee started its work by committing to learn more about the issues of diversity. We concentrated on, but did not limit ourselves to, the issue of race. One result of this study is that collected resources for reading are available to the congregation on a designated shelf in the library.

The committee also decided that we should offer a workshop to focus the discussion on diversity and human difference, and attitudes in the congregation about this topic. In February 2016 we offered a Friday night lecture/discussion led by Dr. Paul Roberts, and on Saturday morning, a discussion based workshop responding to the Friday night event and the data from a congregational survey. Over 70 people attended the Friday night presentation and discussion, and more than 45 attended the Saturday workshop. For a summary of the discussion see Appendix 1.

In order to establish a baseline for our discussion of diversity we surveyed the congregation for demographic information and attitudes about change that might increase our diversity or be brought about by becoming more diverse. We include a summary of the results with this report (see Appendix 2).

In preparation for the workshop and discussions, David preached a series of sermons in January on human difference in a theological context.

In addition to the workshop the committee has sponsored additional events to enable members to go deeper in various way to explore human difference.

Lenten Workshops:

- Writing Group led by Kelly Craigmile
- Reading Group led by Jim Veal

- History Walk led by David Lewicki & Letitia Campbell,
- Events with a group different from ourselves arranged by Dee Raeside.

In conjunction with this initiative the Adult Education committee has offered classes on inclusive language and on the Belhar Confession.

What have we learned? The members of this congregation are deeply interested and engaged with the topic of human difference and its implications here at North Decatur. The most important question that they asked is, why should we become a more diverse community? Because we must have the right reasons, or we are just “collecting stamps.”

What is next?

The Diversity Working Group has met for almost a year. We have profoundly shaped a conversation at NDPC, and we believe that this conversation should go forward. We are recommending that the NDPC Session consider some next steps.

A. The Session should take the lead in articulating a theological understanding of why we are doing this work. Here is the Mission Statement for Diversity Working Group:

Seeding the culture at NDPC in ways that encourage reflection upon the theological reality of human difference, so that we increase the capacity of individuals and of the body to engage and respond to human difference in the church, in our families, and in the wider world.

While this was a good vision for our work, it does not express the deeper theological convictions that underlie the call to “Welcome All.” The need to clearly articulate and deeply convict ourselves of this call to engage and respond to human difference was one of the major learnings of our workshop and discussions.

B. Several of the committees of the session can make this work part of their calling. In particular, Evangelism, Education, Worship, Community Fellowship, and the Mission and Social Concerns committees have a chance to shape NDPC’s vision going forward. The Diversity Committee recommends that these and other committees consider how the activities they organize and oversee might create and nurture a more diverse congregation. We are recommending that the committees reflect on the ways in which their work can forward our exploration of human difference to better carry out the claim that “We Welcome All.”

C. The Diversity Committee recommends that it be dismissed by the session with thanks for its service. Members of the committee included Joanne Nurss, Samuel Darko, Dee Raeside, Alice Hickcox, Darryl Payne, and Lisa Richardson. Initial conversations also included John Brogan Ellis, J. D. McCrary, Martha Vardeman, and Burt Vardeman. Staff support and leadership was provided by David Lewicki and Beth Waltemath.

In addition special thanks go to Marion Reeves for setting up the survey and analyzing the data, and to Katherine Roguski for handling logistics for the weekend workshop.

We further recommend that the session consider a different and expanded committee or entity that, along with the staff, can assist the committees of the session in carrying forward the vision of NDPC as a church that supports and welcomes human difference.

Appendices

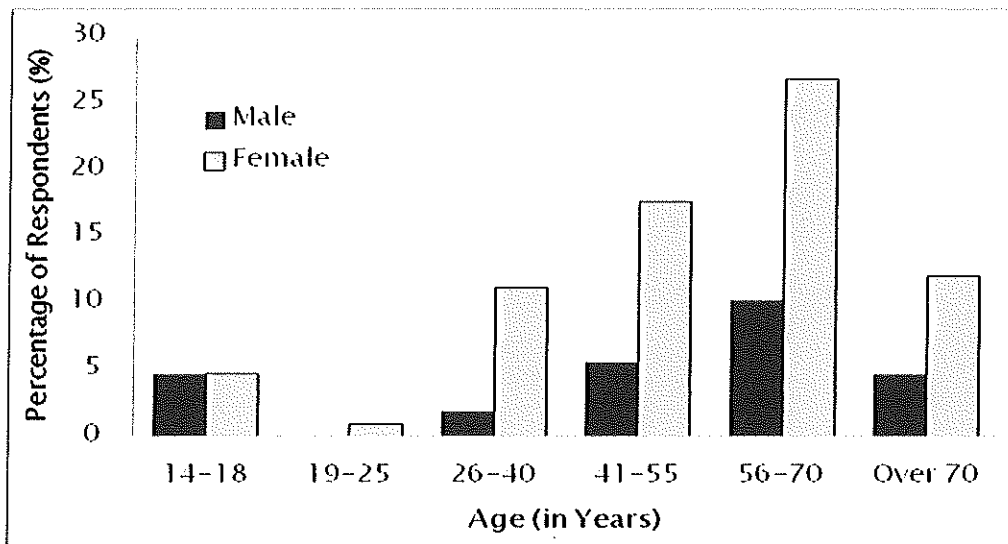
1. Diversity Workshop Notes (Summary of discussion notes)
2. North Decatur Presbyterian Church Diversity Survey (workshop handout)
INSITE data from presbytery about the neighborhood (workshop handout)
3. Reflection by Dee Raeside (I often thought...)

North Decatur Presbyterian Church Baseline Diversity Survey

In order to begin our discussion on how we would like to grow and expand over the coming years, an important first step was gathering baseline information on who we are as a church today. One hundred eleven church attendees aged 18 and above completed our survey and some of the results are presented below. Our average weekly church attendance is 212 people, suggesting we captured about 52% of the regularly attending church population in this survey.

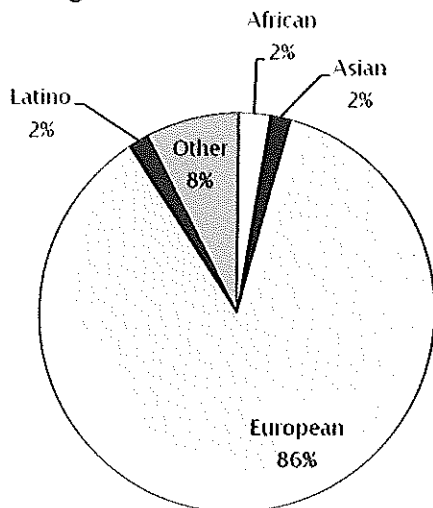
Age and Gender:

With regard to age and gender, almost 73% of respondents identified as female and almost 40% of respondents were 56-70 years old. When asked the gender of the person they are in a relationship with or would be in a relationship with, 11% selected with the same gender as their own and 89% selected the opposite.



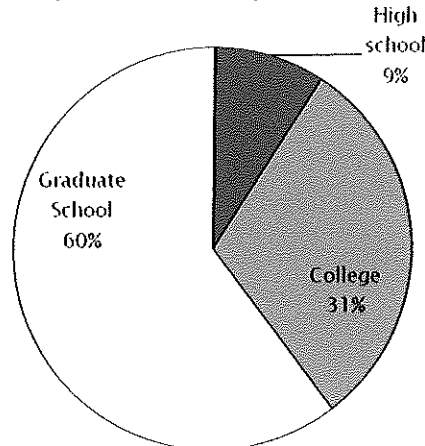
Ethnic Heritage:

With regard to ethnic heritage, around 86% of the respondents identified as being of European heritage:



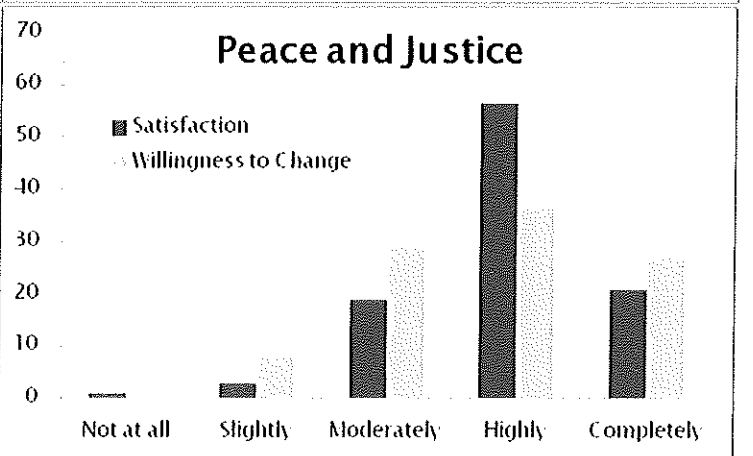
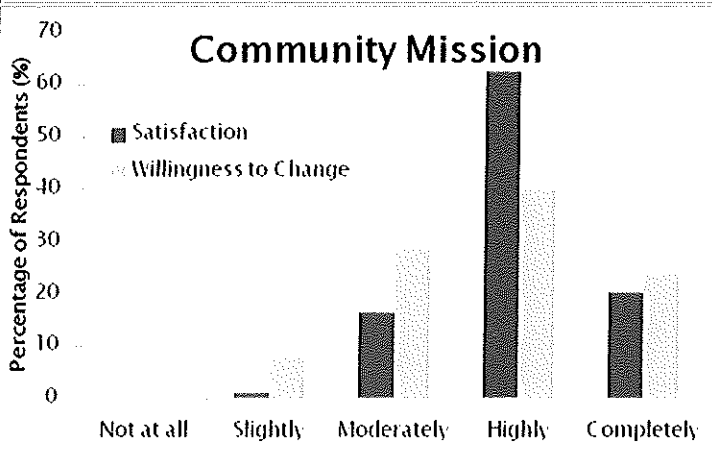
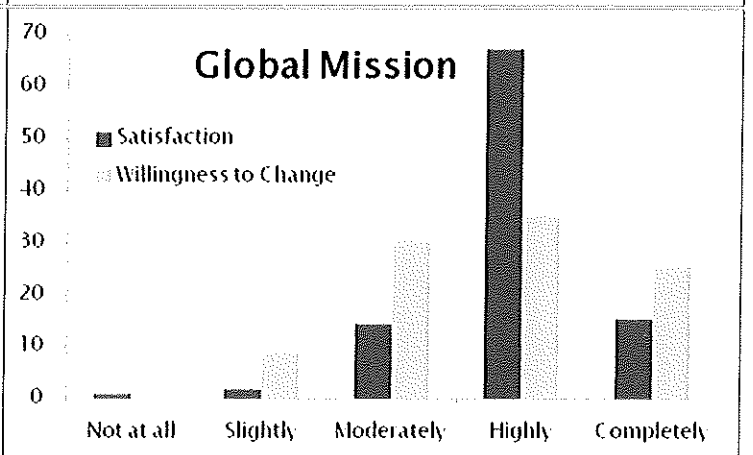
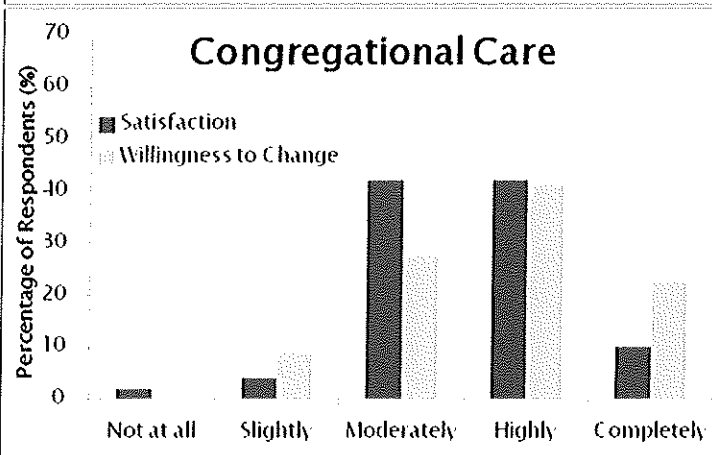
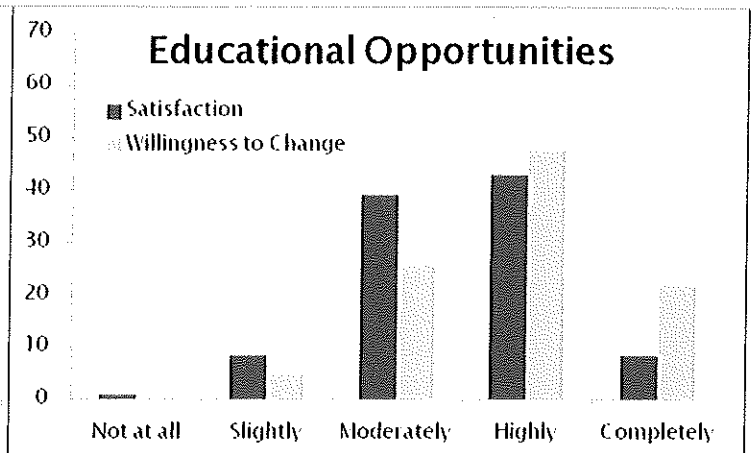
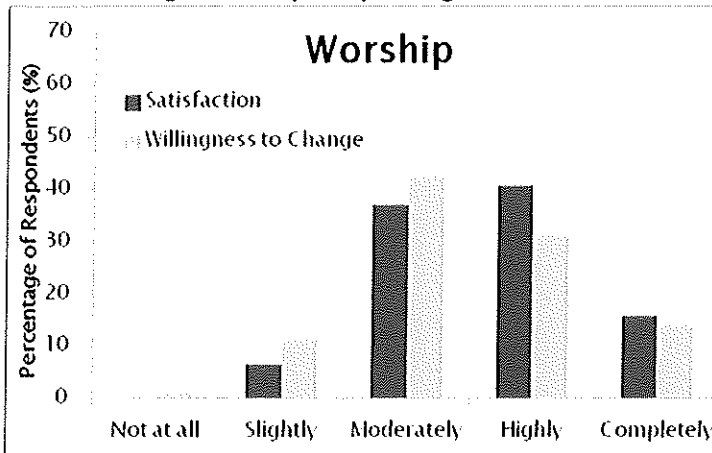
Education Level:

With regard to highest educational level achieved, 60% of respondents have attended graduate school (remember high schoolers also completed this survey and are included):



Satisfaction and Willingness to Alter Practices:

For each of the six areas of emphasis in congregational life (worship, educational opportunities, congregational care, global missions, community missions, and peace and justice), respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the practices that supported diversity. Their satisfaction was ranked on a five point scale from “not at all satisfied” to “completely satisfied.” Then for each of the six areas of emphasis in congregational life, respondents were then asked how willing they would be to alter their practices in order to increase diversity. Their willingness was ranked on a five point scale from “not at all willing” to “completely willing.”



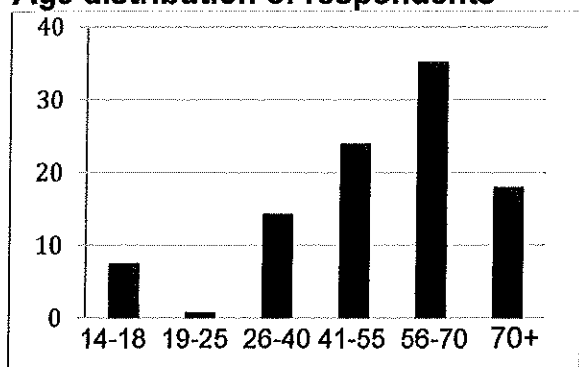
North Decatur Presbyterian Church Diversity Survey

One hundred and thirty four members responded to the Diversity Survey. An effort was made to get the maximum number of respondents, including a special request to the high school members who responded well. The first section of this report is a summary of the demographic make-up of those who responded.

Individuals

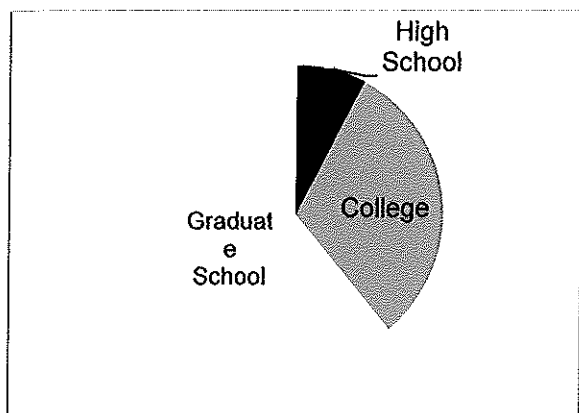
1. Fifty three percent of the members responding were over the age of fifty-six. There was only one respondent between the ages of nineteen and twenty-six.

Age distribution of respondents



2. Seventy one percent of the respondents selected female as their gender identity. One possibility for this could be related to the age distribution explained above. It should be noted that two individuals did not select either gender and this was reflected in some of the comments in the open-ended section. There were two respondents who requested another option for gender identity selection.

3. Except for the high school members who responded, the members reported college or graduate school levels of education. Sixty-one percent of the respondents reported a graduate school level of education.

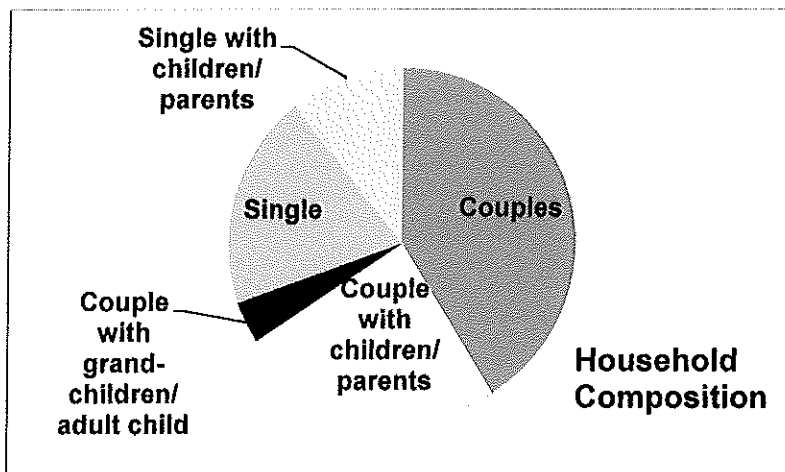


4. One hundred twenty-five respondents selected European as a component of their ethnic heritage. This is 93% of the respondents. Other major ethnicities chosen were: African (4.5%), Asian (1.5%), Latino (1.5%), and Native American (6%). It is possible that the Native American choice was a misunderstanding of ethnicity rather than place of birth.

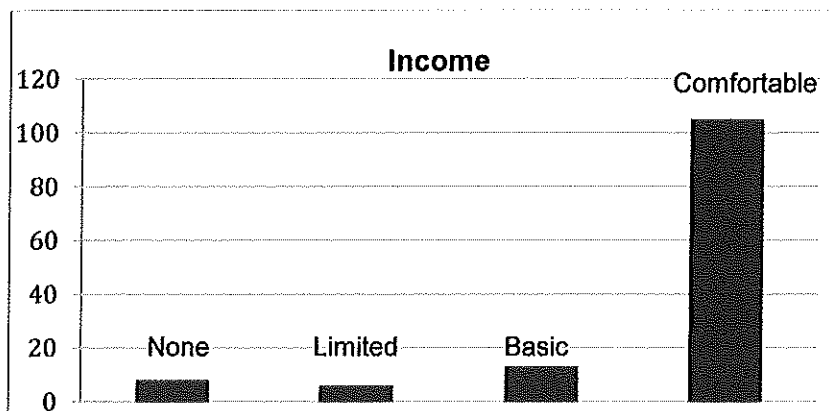
5. When choosing committed relationships 85% selected a male/female relationship and 12% selected either female/female or male/male. 3% did not select a gender preference.

Households

1. Sixty percent of the households have no children and are composed of adult singles or couples. Nineteen percent are singles with parents or children (this includes the high school respondents).



2. When describing household income 79% of the respondents said that their income provided them with a comfortable living. The number of respondents with no income reflects the inclusion of the high school members. Overall the congregation reports that their households have a relatively high level of income as can be seen in chart below

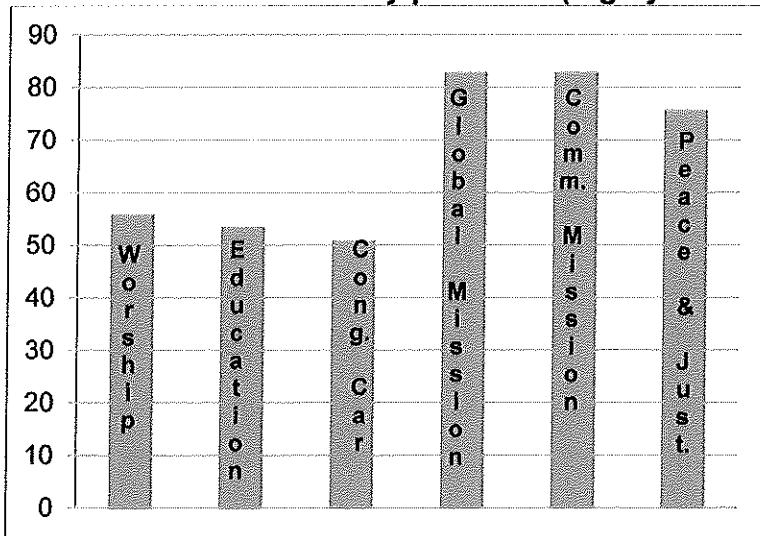


This section of the survey measured how the congregation perceives our diversity practices, their willingness to alter those practices, and in the open-ended comments some insight into their view on diversity.

Current Diversity Practices

1. The responses of highly satisfied and completely satisfied with the current diversity practices were combined as positive indicators of current practice. This combination resulted in a clear differential between the church areas that are focused on the internal life of the membership (worship, education and congregational care) the outreach life (global mission, community mission and peace and justice).

Satisfaction with diversity practices (highly and completely)



2. The open-ended responses indicate that there is a wide definition of what is meant by diversity. The following factors were mentioned in these responses. In addition to these factors 4% responded that they were unable to answer because the term diversity had not been clearly defined for them to be able to respond.

Factor	Percentage	Factor	Percentage
Race/ethnicity	36	Education	6
Location	12	Political	4
LGBTQ	8	Theology	4
Economic	8	Generational	4

3. Open-ended responses also indicated a level of satisfaction with overall current diversity practices. 30% expressed satisfaction with our current diversity practices as a congregation and 44% expressed concerns. Below are a few examples of the statements.

- a. I look at diversity as mostly an attitude. I think we're diverse in this regard.
- b. There is a good amount of diversity in our congregation.
- c. Our congregation is very diverse.

d. We have a wonderful blend of lifestyle diversity and income diversity, but the racial diversity is definitely hurting.

e. We are hampered geographically. I wonder if we are too educated for some folks.

f. I wish there were more races represented

4. The open-ended responses also indicated several areas in which the congregation could focus in order to increase diversity. The need to be welcoming was expressed in 16% of the statements. There were also references to a need for more intergenerational and social activities so that the members could get to know each other better.

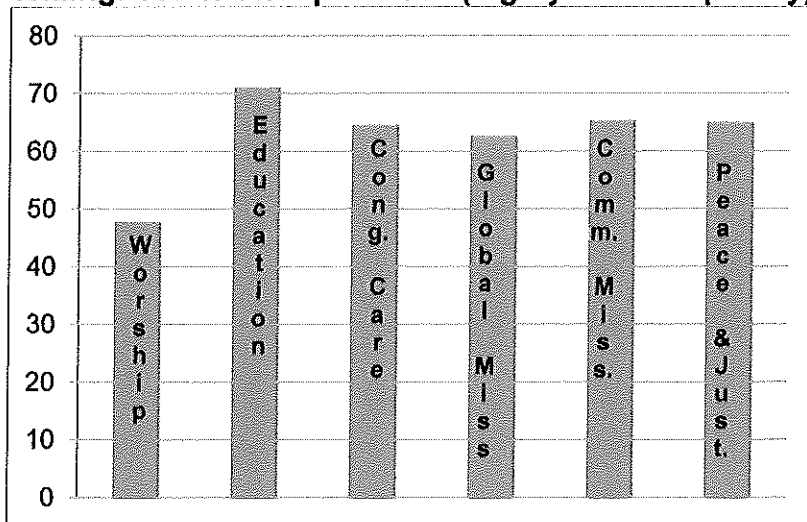
5. There was an overall understanding expressed that our educational, political, theological, and economic self-definition could make others feel out of place.

6. There were repeated references to the need on the church's part to be intentional in its outreach efforts.

Willingness to alter practices

1. The responses of highly willing and completely willing to alter current practice were combined as a willingness to change. In all areas except worship there was a greater than 50% willingness to alter practices.

Willingness to alter practices (highly and completely)



2. The open-ended questions were very diverse in their responses from specific suggestions to questioning what is meant by diversity. One theme that some responses stated was that the congregation needs more specific proposals before the individuals would know how to respond to their willingness to change.

Our Neighbors:

Demographic Information about Residents in a Two Mile Radius from NDPC

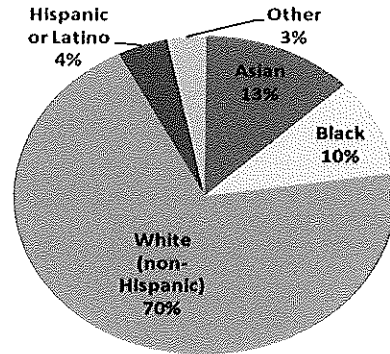
The population of the 2 mile surrounding area is estimated to be around 48,331 people. It is predicted to be going in a positive growth direction, with an estimated population in 2025 of 53,165 people. Below are some summary statistics looking at the demographic makeup of the people living around NDPC.

Household Income:

- Average household income: \$77,490
- Average per capita income: \$34,976
- 90% of residents are living above the poverty line

Racial Diversity:

Roughly 70% of residents identify as being white (non-Hispanic). In the coming years, there is predicted to be an increase in white (non-Hispanics) (+0.6%) and Asians (+0.1%) within the community, whereas those who identify as black (non-Hispanic) are predicted to decrease (-0.6%).



Religiosity:

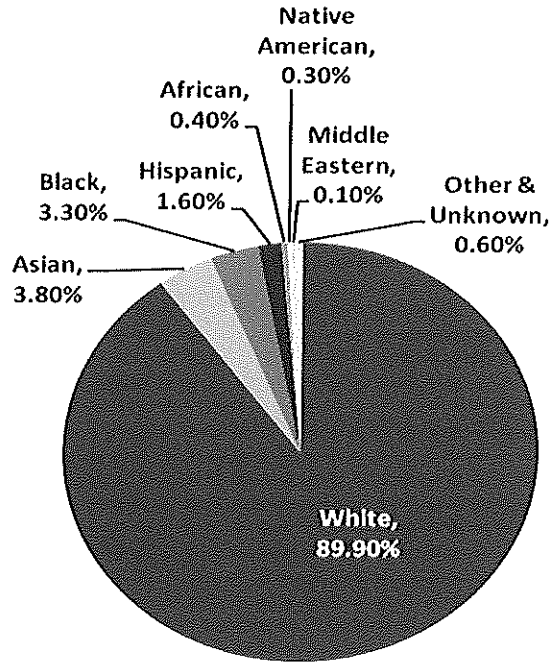
- 32% of residents categorized themselves as 'conservative Evangelical'
- 49% of residents categorized themselves as a 'spiritual person'
- 17% of residents said they watch religious TV programming
- 22% of residents said they believe it is important to attend religious services
- 17% of residents agreed with the statement, 'My faith is very important to me'

Community Values:

Extremely Important	Important	Somewhat Important
Drive for Affluence	Religious Faith	Devotion to Family
Concern for Environment	Entertainment Activities	Commitment to Career
Practice Altruism & Giving		Sense of Well-Being
Broadening Horizons		Traditional
Global Focus		
Sociable		
Dutiful		
Pursuing Security		
Others (vs Self)		
Followers (vs Leaders)		

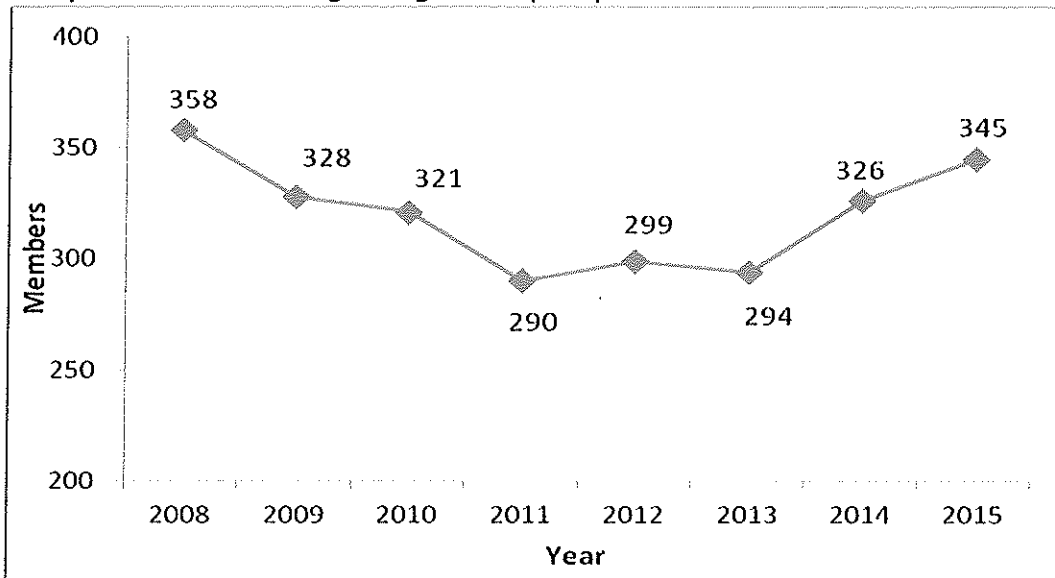
PC(USA) Overall

In recent years, the percentage of non-white PC(USA) members has been growing gradually, however, this diversity is not spread evenly across congregations. In 45% of PC(USA) congregations, every member shares the same racial/ethnic identity.



NDPC Membership

Membership numbers at NDPC grew again this past year to the 345 active members in 2015:



Diversity Workshop Notes

Diversity:

- Why do we want diversity?
- Beloved Community does not need to be homogeneous
- Differences are more perceived than real; hidden differences -- 2
- Diversity isn't just ethnicity; black & white -- include disability, age, Asians, Spanish-speakers -- 6
- Acknowledge, but don't be trapped by guilt -- 3
- Sermon series -- provocative voices

Community vs. Church:

- Striking differences in NDPC & community demographics -- 4
- Is intellectualism/education a barrier? -- 3
- Affluence -- difference between people who live & those who work in Decatur
- Large number of women -- 4
- Large number of clergy
- Human need to belong to same/like groups -- 2
- Have a dialogue with community
- What are demographics of visitors?
- Go to apartments to visit when built
- Need a place to be visible -- 2

Tension:

- NDPC is intolerant of intolerance
- Risks in being welcoming to all -- pick up truck with or without Confederate flag/can we make a racist welcome? --3
- What is invisible? Need to sensitize congregation -- 3
- Place to be "me" vs. being challenged
- Differences in people's experiences, points of view -- 2
- Come to church to be replenished, not be on 5 committees
- Transportation -- MARTA, bus for Emory students
- Many like status quo
- NDPC is willing to work at hard issues

Welcome:

- Welcome those who show up; we are changed by them; be genuine with a physical & emotional hug; be more aware of reaching out to others. -- 6
- Relationships, not task-oriented, especially to new people
- More opportunities to get to know one another such as lunch or fellowship after church, affiliated groups such as Knit Wits & Sages; Salt Shakers -- 12
- Get to know one another by name
- Culture of hospitality -- efforts to meet new members
- Take a visitor to lunch
- Greeters to talk with visitors in narthex & parking lot before & after church -- 2

How to move from welcome to inclusion; authentic engagement -- 4
Personal responsibility of that person to offer gifts to the congregation

Change:

Be willing to change, but only so far; limits to diversity? how much change can we tolerate to welcome differences -- 6

8:30 service is smaller, more intimate, but otherwise looks like 11:00 service -- 3

Change would require more staff, more money

Does increased diversity require change? Sameness is comfortable -- 2

Need to bring in new people to be changed

Why is worship everywhere segregated? Differences in cultures? -- 2

NDPC offer events that would attract a variety of groups -- poetry, music, stories

Need variety, not change -- explore our connectedness

We need to be as comfortable with others who are different as we are with ourselves

We are called to "love one another" & "to make disciples of all nations."

NDPC's services are not designed to connect people to one another

Have young adult fellowship group & group for young families