



Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church Mission Study 2019

Discernment Team – Congregational Discernment Process

17 Church Road, Stewartville, NJ 08886

www.ogpc.org

Date of charter: 1775

Certificate of Incorporation: 1839

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Summary

Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church is proud of its rich and distinguished heritage, actively involved in the needs of its congregation and community in the present, and eager to grow with confidence into a future known only to God.

Gathered in 1740 and serviced by a beautiful colonial style sanctuary built in 1835, the church buildings sit on fifteen acres of park-like property adjacent to an historic cemetery (now a separate corporation) which itself remains a vital community asset. In this country setting, the church is located on a county highway and only one mile from Interstate 78. With approximately 400 members, it ministers to a congregation of mixed backgrounds, needs, desires and expectations bound together in common purpose to “celebrate the love of God in all (we) say and do”. A vibrant Sunday worship service and Christian youth education program are foundational to the congregation’s existence. The church enjoys support from committed and active lay leadership and a capable staff of employees.

Moving into the community in Christian mission, the church provides over 3000 pounds of fresh produce grown in its own garden to the needy, offers food and shelter to homeless families on a regular basis as a founding participant in the Family Promise network, has initiated a new program of community environmental initiatives, and sponsors a security and safety team that has become a leader in public security issues and has enhanced congregational relationships and communications with other faith groups, local and state police and various government agencies. Pleased to share its outstanding music program with the community, Old Greenwich annually offers a choral workshop open to the public under the direction of a different internationally renowned composer/director each year culminating in a free evening concert for all. It has become a much-anticipated event in the calendar of the church.

With thanks to God, the church is blessed with real and significant strengths that have both defined and carried it through more than two hundred and seventy five years of active ministry. And while there is always need for a church to grow and improve in any category, in recent years some possible weaknesses in church function and result have developed or become apparent to the congregation and church leaders which must be addressed going forward. Certain weaknesses appear to be a reflection of the church’s place in an increasingly secular world and changes in the lifestyles of contemporary families. Some identifiable weakness may be the direct and inevitable result of the unsettled history of pastoral leadership over the past ten years and/or other factors that are unique to Old Greenwich. For the church to realize its full potential, expressing God’s will in the lives of its people and in the community, it is important to identify and understand the strengths and weaknesses of Old Greenwich in the present, so those understandings may themselves be the key determinates in developing the plans and aspirations for its future.

In this spirit the Congregation set out to undertake the discernment process that is described in the following pages. All pray that, when the process is completed, the church will be blessed by the leadership and commitment of a newly installed pastor who will bring energy, insight, and commitment to inspiring the Old Greenwich congregation to truly reflect the glory of God into the years ahead.

Introduction

During the time of interim, the Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church (OGPC) was led in a Mission Study by the Interim Pastor, Anita Hendrix and a Transition Team (also referred to as the Discernment Team). The Team was a cross-section of the church, including elders and deacons, that represented the congregation through their various leadership experiences, points of view and demographics. The team included George Bradlau, Lisa Gray, Jennifer Miller, Harry Pursel and Katie Rienzo. This Report is the culmination of the work of this team.

Working with the Pastor, the team began to meet on a regular basis in February 2019. The purpose was to begin a process of preparing the congregation to invite and install a new pastor to lead Old Greenwich into the future. Prefaced by prayer and Bible readings, Team discussions centered around the present circumstances of Old Greenwich, what seemed to be working well, what might need improvement, the perceived desires of the congregation, attendance at Sunday worship, the church budget and congregational giving, and more. Discussion about the mission of the church and possible models for the future were fueled and informed by the shared reading of Faithful Resistance by Rick Ufford-Chase. The book explores a number of alternative possibilities to the traditional church model and traditional church thinking in the context of an evolving and increasingly secular society. Ultimately the team reviewed and adopted a publication and guide from Newton Presbytery entitled “Discovering and Connecting the Pieces Off Our Church” to enter into structured dialogue with the Old Greenwich congregation. That approach required the Congregation to meet on four different occasions to engage in specified group activities and open discussion on designated subjects. The designated subjects were:

- The Church Timeline – Identifying important points in the church history, marking important positive and negative events, as well as starting to identify where God is leading OGPC today.
- Demographics – Outlining important demographic information about the neighborhood and areas surrounding our church including types of household, income, age and education levels.
- People/Places/Things – Identifying areas in the community where people regularly spend time and exploring how we could serve the community in those places and spread the Good News of the Gospel.
- Financial Picture/Mission – A presentation of the current financial picture of the church and trends in spending and giving followed by sharing ideas of God’s continuing mission for Old Greenwich.

The first congregational meeting of this process was in March 2019. Each of the four meetings was led by one or more members of the Transition team. Notes were taken at each meeting by Transition Team members to capture both the details and general sense of what the congregation discussed and produced during each event. The team then met after the congregational meetings to discuss and review what had occurred and to document the findings or results. The team prepared an agenda for the next congregational meeting and repeated until that part of the process was completed in April 2019. Information from and about these meetings will be set forth in more detail later in this report. In its last phase, the team met and worked together to review and discuss findings and conclusions and to begin the process of drafting a report. The Discernment Team hopes that the content of this report will be of value to the congregation, to the anticipated Pastor Nominating Committee yet to be elected, and to possible new pastor candidates who seek information about where Old Greenwich has been, where it is now, and how, with God’s help, it might approach the future.

Old Greenwich Overview

History

Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church and its current congregation are blessed by a rich and inspiring heritage built on the sacrifices and commitments of past members and friends. The church and its people have been an important resource to the community since pre-colonial times. The current sanctuary, a stone façade mounted on a sturdy frame of hand-hewn timbers connected by stout wooden pegs, was constructed in 1835 by members of the congregation. The interior of the sanctuary is a simple rendering of classic colonial style in light color to invite peaceful and undistracted focus on the plain wooden cross that is mounted on the wall behind the communion table. The cross is the intended center of the worship experience. The original manse, today serving as the office and administrative center of Greenwich Cemetery, was also built that year. The active and lovely cemetery, which is immediately adjacent to the church, now a separate corporation, is the final destination for the remains of many members and friends who lived faithful lives and participated fervently in the happenings of the church in years past.

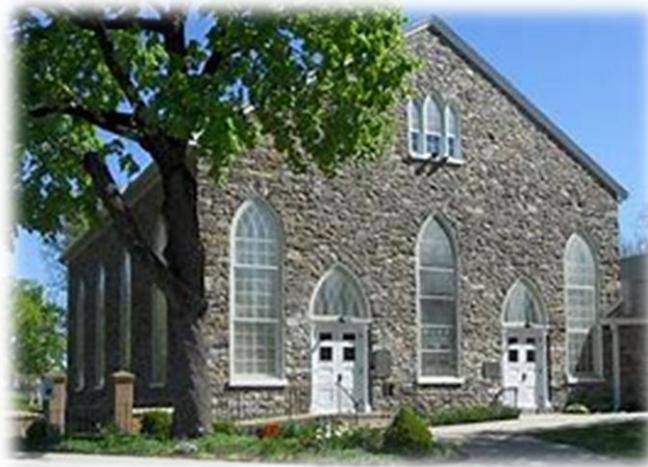
Gathered in 1740, Old Greenwich is approaching its 300th birthday. The first site was nearby where the faithful met in the equivalent of a large log cabin. It is still referred to as “the old log church”. David Brainerd, a famous frontier missionary to the Delaware Indian people, preached at the old log church in late 1742 and early 1743 to a pioneering congregation. Many members made notable contributions to the cause of American independence in the Revolutionary War. Among them are General William Maxwell (buried in Greenwich Cemetery) a former elder of the church who commanded the New Jersey Division of the Continental Army and is celebrated by a statue at Valley Forge, PA where he endured that difficult winter with his men. Another is Thomas Stewart, an elder of the church for 43 years, who was secretary to George Washington during the war and after whom Stewartsville, our community, is named.



Memorial Hall is the large event and meeting room and social gathering place for the church. On three of its four walls, plaques are mounted commemorating the long line of pastors who have preached the Word at Old Greenwich and noting key accomplishments of each. Several members and friends of Old Greenwich of particular accomplishment or historical importance from the first days of the church, such as first woman Elder Jessie Beirs (1962), are also celebrated. Symbols such as the plaques and the church building itself are reminders to the current congregation that the church can only continue to live and reflect the Glory of God through the ongoing deeds and efforts of its people and that the current generation of members and friends exists in stewardship of the legacy those before have visited upon the present. As the current congregation moves the church forward, the legacy informs our ministry and mission.

Recently, and perhaps for the first time in its long history, Old Greenwich has experienced an extended period of uncertainty as a result of the quick succession of several interim and installed pastors during the last ten years with at least two periods of six months when only pulpit supply pastors were present. This period began when

in 2008 the pastor for the previous ten years announced his retirement from the ministry. Shortly thereafter, because of a change in personal circumstance, the pastor requested “reinstallation” at Old Greenwich. The congregation enthusiastically welcomed his return. The pastor then resumed his ministry until he permanently retired in 2012. But that return to the pulpit in 2008 began a decade in which Old Greenwich did not have any one pastor for longer than four years. After the installed pastor retired in 2012, there was a six month time of pulpit supply until an official interim pastor could begin, then two years with the interim leading to the call for an installed pastor who served only three years and departed rather abruptly. Her departure was followed by a period of six months of pulpit supply leading to the current interim pastor who has been leading Old Greenwich for about fourteen months. This series of pastoral changes has made it more difficult for the congregation to look to the future with confidence. Not surprisingly, despite its strong historical foundation, and unbending in its commitment to the future, the congregation and its lay leadership now appear to be somewhat less certain of their purpose as a Christian community and less energized in their approach to the many tasks that need to be done to lift Old Greenwich up to its full potential as a platform for God’s work in the community. Steady and dedicated pastoral leadership is needed for the next chapter of God’s work with and through Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church.



Our Present

In 2015, after a two-year period of interim ministry, the congregation called a new pastor with much excitement and expectation. There was much about the called pastor's experience, capabilities, and interests that convinced the congregation that she was well suited to lead the church through the next ten years and into a world yet to be imagined. But unfortunately, the pastoral relationship led to dissatisfactions with some members of the congregation and to the pastor herself. She resigned in January 2018 after giving the congregation short notice of her intention. She became the installed pastor of a larger, urban church. Now almost two years later, the congregation still exhibits some distress and confusion over that particular separation. Weekly attendance and financial giving have declined some in these recent years attributable, at least in part, to the unsettled pastoral leadership during the period. Despite this discouraging episode, as is discussed more fully below, the congregation remains strong and committed to learning, growing, and celebrating the love of God at and through Old Greenwich in the years ahead. Within the last year the Session has formed a new committee to focus on congregational growth and increasing attendance and participation in church matters, and the Stewardship ("Discipleship") team is invigorated with positive results in the church's bottom line.

Membership

From 1990 into the 2000s, the towns surrounding the church experienced an increase in population as commuters to New York City, Philadelphia and around New Jersey spread out in search of affordable housing. The growth in population along with strong pastoral leadership led to an increase in membership. As noted above, during the last decade, OGPC experienced a decrease in membership that follows similar trends in church attendance and membership in the US. Indeed, it is reported that average weekly worship attendance for PC(USA) nationally declined from 748,744 in 2013 to 565,467 in 2018. Population growth in this area has slowed, and many people no longer choose to attend church on Sunday mornings.

Our current membership is approximately 400, and on a typical Sunday, at the time of this report, approximately 110 are in attendance. In the discernment process, the congregation's awareness of the need for growth and desire for increased attendance and participation was evident. The congregation is welcoming to new members and desires to be more visible in service to the community.

Demographically, the congregation is generally representative of the inhabitants of Warren and Hunterdon counties in New Jersey. Because of our proximity to the New Jersey/Pennsylvania state line, we also have members who come from nearby Easton, Pennsylvania. Our congregation tends to be somewhat older than the population of the community on average and is limited in cultural and racial diversity. More information on demographics of the area and church can be found in the Demographics section.

Buildings and Grounds

Old Greenwich occupies 15 park-like acres adjacent to the sacred serenity of the 35-acre Greenwich Cemetery, which has its own incorporation status, located on Greenwich Church Rd. in Stewartsville (Greenwich Township), New Jersey. Its property abuts State Route 173 and is located close to Exit 3 of Interstate 78. The Delaware River and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are about three miles away as the crow flies. Corn fields separate the church property from the highway and Pohatcong creek flows behind the property. In this bucolic setting, Old Greenwich has thrived for 280 years. It is uniquely beautiful, quiet and peaceful. The setting inspires a focused, meditative worship experience, reminding us of the reality of God's wondrous creative work on this planet. But, the relative remoteness from any busy neighborhood or commercial center presents a challenge for the congregation to identify its neighbors and develop meaningful mission and outreach initiatives

in the “community”. Similarly, as the congregation is formed by people from several different surrounding towns and the states of both New Jersey and Pennsylvania, strategies for church growth need to be multi-directed.

The historic church with its additions and open campus all exist in support of the operations of the sanctuary built in 1835. Connected to the sanctuary is Memorial Hall and a classroom basement level which was added in 1959. In 2004 Trinity Wing, a contemporary office and classroom two story space was completed and dedicated for service. A short walk down Greenwich Church Road is the former manse built in 1835 (now the Cemetery office and administrative building) and, on the other side of the street, the current manse built in 1959. The manse was renovated in 2014 and is the current residence of the OGPC Interim pastor. It is maintained and offered by the church as home to its pastor. The church takes pride in the beauty, historic significance, and serviceability of its several buildings and considers the buildings and grounds to be an inspiration, a precious asset, as well as a responsibility of the church family.



A children’s playground, constructed and maintained primarily to service the needs of Greenwich Nursery School, and a softball/soccer field available for community use also

grace the grounds. The sanctuary and Memorial Hall are enjoyed by community groups including AA, the Boy and Girl Scouts (Old Greenwich is proud to be the Charter sponsor of Boy Scout Troop 63), and annual community music concerts offered by Raritan River Music Festival (a non-profit professional music group), and more. Greenwich Nursery School has been hosted by Old Greenwich church for over four decades and a strong relationship exists between the church and school. Memorial Hall is the official polling site for the Stewartsville Election District and is approved for that purpose by the Warren County Board of Elections. Voting for all local, state and federal elections has occurred in this facility for decades. The Session and congregation are exploring other suitable uses for the buildings and property for the congregation and community. One such discussion has focused on building an outdoor labyrinth and/or outdoor worship center to host events such as Easter sunrise services. The possibilities are many.

In sum, while truly an asset that sets Old Greenwich apart in many positive ways, the location and setting of the church can also be a weakness for other initiatives. We are a “commuter church”. And while we draw friends and members from a wide and diverse regional community, we are challenged to determine what should be done “close to home” for the benefit of all.

The Worship Experience

The Sunday worship service is central to the congregation's identity and purpose. A variety of relationships within the congregation, both newer and long-time, enrich the community life of the congregation. We share each other's concerns and blessings and pray for one another. Time with the Young Church is an important part of the service with 15 to 20 children hurrying to the front of the sanctuary to interact with pastor, then departing for Sunday School or service in the Mission Garden during the summer. Lay participation is a regular feature of worship, with a different lay reader each Sunday. Worship ideas are generated and coordinated by a dedicated and active Worship and Music Committee.



During the sermon, many congregants are eager to hear a pastoral message that nurtures faith, provides inspiration to action, is relevant to today's times and is intellectually challenging. Our current and previous pastors have consistently satisfied the congregation's expectations in this regard and OGPC looks forward to carrying this tradition into the future with a new pastor. Our services include singing from a traditional as well as contemporary hymnal, and the congregation is blessed by a variety of musicians playing violin, flute, cello, guitar and drums as well as singing offered by people of all ages.

Worship music is historically and in the present an especially important part of the worship experience at OGPC. The choir has grown to approximately 25 enthusiastic members in recent years and thrives under the direction and leadership of its professional co-directors. OGPC is known in the community for its rich music tradition, and this important aspect of worship is appreciated by the congregation. Indeed, many in the congregation cite the quality of the music in worship as a reason why they chose Old Greenwich and continue to attend. Once a year, the choir hosts a choral workshop open to other singers in the community and led by a world renowned composer. This is an important outreach for the church. OGPC also encourages a children's choir, known as the Sunshine Singers, for children in kindergarten through 4th grade. Recently, a chime choir has been started.



Christian Education

Children

OGPC strives to maintain a vibrant, engaging Sunday School program for its youth. Sunday School attendance has declined in the past five years. In an OGPC Mission Study Report issued in 2014, it was reported that about 20-40 children participated in Time with the Young Church during Sunday worship service and the following session of Sunday School on that day. Most recently, the number of children involved on any given Sunday may be 15-20. Children are instructed in two groups of Kindergarten to fourth grade and fifth grade through seventh grade. The Christian Ed leaders are always looking to recruit more teachers and assistants for the program. The church has a child protection policy that no child is to be alone with one adult. This simple rule is sometimes difficult to follow because of lack of adult volunteers on any given day. Like most churches,

OGPC is anxious to bring more young families into the life of the church to enhance youth opportunities and adult participation.

Time with the Young Church is an important part of OGPC worship service almost every week. The children enjoy receiving their own Biblically based message from the Pastor and the adults benefit both from the substance of the pastoral message and an appreciation of the open honesty in which the children interact with the Pastor during that time.

During the recent years of changing pastoral leadership, the youth confirmation experience has continued each year. Some years the entire program has been led by adult lay leaders and in some years by the Interim or Installed Pastor. For the next confirmation class season, the Interim Pastor has committed to leading the course of instruction.

OGPC has successfully conducted a youth Vacation Bible Camp for one week in August for many years. It is a Christian Education experience eagerly anticipated by youth and parents and fondly remembered by its alumni/alumna who return to assist the adult leaders in subsequent years. At this time, the VBC program is in need of new, enthusiastic adult leadership. Prior leadership has been wonderful but desires to move into other areas of church needs and programs.

The OGPC Youth Group offers opportunity for Christian fellowship and education through social activities, mission work and worship experiences to our teenagers. Within the last few years, the OGPC Youth Group has joined with similar groups from two other nearby Presbyterian churches to enlarge the number of regular participants and range and nature of activities that can be offered to them. The previous installed pastor of OGPC gave high priority to Youth Christian Ed and Group and devoted considerable time and energy to both programs. Both programs thrived during that period.

Adult

In recent years, OGPC has offered limited opportunities for adult Christian education beyond the worship service itself. There remains an active women's Bible study of committed participants which meets once a week on a weekday. For a period of several weeks this past spring OGPC offered a Bible study program focusing on Biblical passages that referenced environmental/ecological stewardship. That experience led to the development of the OGPC Green Team which is a Mission to increase respect for the earth as a gift from God and to influence daily behaviors in the congregation and community that benefit the environment.

In years past, OGPC offered regular offerings as adult seminars or discussion groups on a variety of topics. There has been interest expressed in starting up such a program again. Leadership is needed to develop and present attractive and appropriate offerings to members and friends of the congregation. Similarly, OGPC offers limited small group meetings and programs for adults beyond its choir and the activities highlighted above. This too is an issue that needs and deserves focused attention from OGPC leadership.

Serving God and Community

Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church has a long commitment to making a difference in the surrounding community and the world at large. For example, OGPC was one of the founding congregations of Family Promise of Warren County and the Interfaith Hospitality Network (FPWC/IHN). These programs address the immediate needs of homeless families in our area. Multiple times per year, OGPC hosts families with children in need of safe, comfortable, overnight accommodations. Many members participate by serving as overnight hosts, providing the meals, or sharing fellowship and a listening ear.



The Mission Garden, grown on vacant property of Greenwich Cemetery, grows, harvests, and donates thousands of pounds of food annually. We are entering our 10th year of this ministry that both feeds hungry people in our area and teaches our children about sharing the beauty and bounty of God's green Earth with people less fortunate. During the summer, Sunday school children harvest the vegetables to be provided to those in need during the week. The Mission Garden also provides service opportunities for members through Weekly Weeder sign ups as well as opportunities to deliver fresh produce to the local food pantry.

Along with these programs, OGPC also engages in God's work through service in the following ways among others:

- Presbyterian Depot – Low income families can start their home with donations of kitchen items, pots and pans and other home items from various congregations including Old Greenwich.
- Outreach to shut-ins including regularly scheduled visitation and Home Communion.
- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts/ AA who hold meetings at our facilities.
- Special Fellowship Dinners– hosted by the Deacons, youth group, Boy Scouts and other groups, inviting members of the church as well as members of the community for food and fellowship.
- Child Safety Team – each deacon, Sunday School teacher as well as any member working with youth are trained on the process created by the team to ensure child safety. This is the first of its kind in the area.
- Vacation Bible School – one week during the summer hosting children ages preschool to 6th.
- Greenwich Nursery School has been a successful preschool program housed in Old Greenwich for over 40 years.
- Safety and Security Team – this team was created by members to prepare for medical or other type of emergencies and better coordinate with first responders. The program includes training sessions for the congregations and ushers.
- Youth Group – OGPC has joined in relationship youth groups from two other Presbyterian congregations in the area to enhance program opportunities in this area.
- The Green Team – a newly formed group to enhance environmental awareness find ways to decrease our impact on the environment
- Meals on Wheels
- Deborah Circle (Women's Bible Study)



The congregation seeks leadership and opportunity for adult Christian education experiences. Active discussions within the church are underway to address this concern and develop more social and service opportunities in the church community. Importantly, the session, deacons and the congregation believe that the church can do more to minister to the needs to its own people, in particular, the sick and the homebound. Session and the deacons are working to remedy this perceived weakness.

OGPC Staffing

Currently, OGPC maintains a paid staff of seven people:

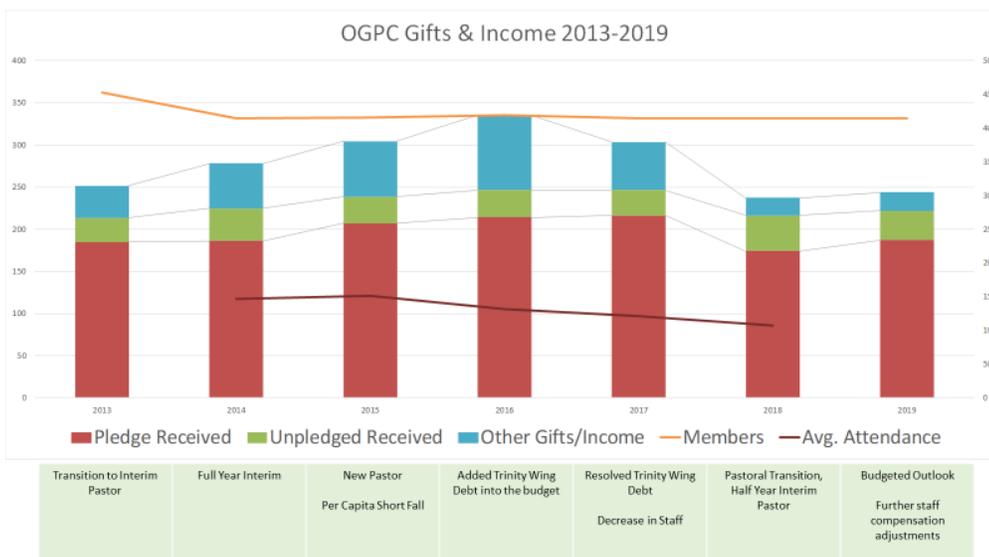
- 1) Minister of Word and Sacrament (Pastor): worship leader, head of staff, spiritual advisor, coordinator
- 2) Administrative Assistant: administrative duties, operates church office
- 3) Co-Music Director Choir: choir director, coordinates anthem and hymns with pastor
- 4) Co-Music Director Organist/Pianist: assists in choir directing, leads youth choir, chime choir, provides musical accompaniment to choir and congregation
- 5) Sexton(s): maintain building and grounds; currently a husband/wife team
- 6) Treasurer: maintains church financial records/books; pays church financial obligations
- 7) Financial Secretary: records all financial gifts to church and attributes to source where known; tracks financial pledges by members

OGPC Pastor is a full-time position. Each of the other paid staff positions are part-time. The church office is open and staffed by the Administrative Assistant Monday-Thursday from 8:30am to 1pm. The office is closed on Fridays.

Session and other church leaders are aware that Old Greenwich could offer more and enhanced programs for youth, adult and community if it offered the position of Associate Pastor or part-time professional position such as Director of Christian Education or Youth Leader/Coordinator. It is recognized that lack of such additional professional services puts added pressure on the Pastor and on lay leadership to provide a sufficient level of service in certain program areas. But the Session believes at this time that the financial status of Old Greenwich, while adequately covering the current staff, buildings and grounds and other expenses of the church, is not yet strong enough to support the added financial burden of increased professional staff. From 2000 to 2005, Old Greenwich did support both a Pastor and Associate Pastor position. Church leaders hope to grow the congregation's financial resources so that additional program and/or pastoral staff may be added.

Finances

The congregation recognizes the need to financially support OGPC's ministries, our facilities, our professional staff as well as world mission. Recently, as membership has experienced a moderate decline, financial support has also moderately declined, as shown in the chart below.



However, the congregation has responded enthusiastically and generously when budget shortfalls occur. Increasing awareness of stewardship and congregational giving is an area of opportunity for new pastoral leadership. During Discernment activities with the congregation, the link between giving, attracting new members and energizing existing members was a topic that came up again and again. Developing leadership, nourishing congregants' spiritual gifts and serving the community in new and unique ways – the congregation has recognized these needs and is ready for leadership to help us move forward.

Towards that end, leadership is committed to increasing participation of current membership, as well as attracting new members. As previously noted, a Membership Committee has formed with a commission to identify how each part of the church will increase engagement. During our Discernment activities, the congregants brainstormed ideas of how we could spread the Good News in our community. A list of the ideas can be found in the Discernment Process section in the Who What Where Exercise.

He said to them, "Go through the whole world and preach the gospel to all mankind." Mark 16:15

The Budget and Finance Committee reports monthly on the status of all financial matters to Session, reports yearly to the Congregation through our Corporate President at the January Annual Meeting, and cooperates and communicates with all church committees and groups on all budgeting and financial matters. An active Discipleship Team encourages year-round engagement and leads the fall stewardship campaign. As of the end of August 2019, the OGPC treasurer reported that the church was about \$25,900 behind on Pledge commitments and about \$19,200 over budget on expenditures. This is in part the result of normally lower worship attendance during the summer months. Nevertheless, OGPC maintained a balance of available cash over \$33,500 with an additional \$21,400 in the Memorial Fund. The endowment balance was about \$813,000 at that time. More information on Finances can be found in the Discernment Process, Finance overview.

The Process of Discernment

During the time of discernment, the team gathered information from the congregation to identify its strengths, as well as areas that could be improved. This information is critical for any understanding and planning for where God may be leading OGPC into the future. Guided by the Newton Presbytery process of “Discovering and Connecting the Pieces of our Church”, the Discernment Team led four congregational meetings. Each of the four meetings focused on a particular topic:

- Timeline – Identifying important points in the church history as well as where God is leading us today
- Demographics – Outlining important household information about the neighborhood and areas surrounding our church
- People/Places/Things – Finding additional areas where we may engage and serve the community
- Financial Picture/Mission – A presentation of the current financial picture of the church compared to previous years followed by sharing ideas of God’s continuing mission for Old Greenwich.

The discernment team participated in discussion, asking questions where more information was needed and leading participants. Notes were taken during the meeting and distilled and discussed by the team after the meetings. The following pages summarize the outcome of each meeting.

First Meeting: Timeline Event

Meeting Attendance: Approximately 25

Dwelling in the Word

Each meeting began with a Dwelling in the Word exercise where small groups read a passage (in this case Luke 10:1-12 – The Mission of the Seventy) and discussed what stood out to them or what felt meaningful at that point in time. At this meeting, this discussion was held in tables of 4 to 6 and the following ideas were captured.

- Keeping in mind inclusivity and having a welcoming approach as we move forward.
- The feeling of spreading the word and how that can be discouraging sometimes when people aren’t ready to receive it.
- When talking about faith and trying to spread the gospel, the first time may not work out but keep trying. People tend to hear things when they’re ready.
- Getting back to the roots of the church. Sharing of Bible stories and the work of Christ.



After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Luke 10:1-2

Marking the Timeline

Using post-it notes, individuals reflected on positive, difficult and other times in the life of the church. These could be personal events or happenings in the life of the church. Participants were also asked to note times when they felt that the holy spirit was present in the church. After the timeline notes were placed on the timeline, a group discussion was held. The colors below categorized the events in the following ways:

- **Pink** – Good or great or positive
- **Blue** – time that was difficult, hard or conflicted
- **Green/Yellow** – when you felt the holy spirit was present in the church

From the timeline activity, the discernment team noted the following trends:

- More blue in the last 10 years than other colors indicating difficult or challenging times (particularly related to pastor turnover).
- Most of the post-it notes were in the second half (from the 1990s)
- Many positive events (pink notes), in the 1990s
- More institutional blue towards the end of the timeline. (many of the negative events prior to 2010 were personal in nature).
- 9/11 brought people back to church because it affected so many people in this area directly



Picture from 2000s



Picture from 2010s

The timeline event encouraged participants to reminisce about what brought them to the church, and how the church has changed over the years. Observations included the strong sense of history in the church and how the church weathered challenging times in the past and grew with God's direction. The common strain of the church has been the strong fellowship of the members even though pastors have come and gone, as well as the many offerings the church provides to the community. Looking towards the future, the participants feel optimistic that we can continue and expand our outreach and ministry.

The participants then identified biblical stories and how they overlap with the historical events of the church. A sample of the ideas are below:

- Feeding of the 5,000 from mission garden
- Example of 9/11 reflected in Noah and the Ark and bringing people back into the faith
- The sense of Paul's letters, how he would talk to small group gatherings.
- Jesus rescues. Times of need are designed to show us what's important and to trust God.

Observations from the Timeline Report meeting by the Discernment Team

The timeline event shows that the congregation¹ is feeling that stable, long-term leadership is essential. After years of growth and stability, our recent era has been challenging, and the challenge may have had an impact on membership and engagement. The team senses that the congregation is open to change and is hopeful that strong, stable, innovative leadership will help us move towards the future.

¹ The Discernment Team notes that the numbers of member participants in these meetings was limited. But the team is also satisfied that the participants fully reflected the ideas and attitudes of the congregation at large and included those members who are generally most active in church-related matters and programs.

Second Meeting: Demographics Event

Meeting attendance: Approximately 35

Information for the demographics meeting was researched using the recommendation from the Presbytery from the following website: www.maps.nazarene.org/DemographicsPresbyterian . The demographics are based on a 5-mile radius from the church location. This data was compared to an 8-mile radius as well as a 3-mile radius and no major discernable differences were noted. It is important to note, however, that the numbers and percentages reflected in this data was based on the 2010 census. A mission study report for OGPC was issued in 2014 citing the same statistics. These are expected to change, perhaps even dramatically in the next census, which begins in 2020.

Population

- The population in the area is in a slight decline of 0.4%
- The population that identifies itself as Unclaimed (meaning not affiliated with any of the 236 Religious groups) is slightly higher than the national average. In our area 54% identify as Unclaimed; 51% is the national average.

Family structure

• Married with children	23.0%
• Married Couples No Children	34.1%
• Male Single Parent	2.0%
• Female Single Parent	6.8%
• Other Family, Male Head	2.2%
• Other Family: Female Head	4.5%
• Total Families	72.6%
• Non-Family, Living Alone	22.3%
• Non-Family, Not Living Alone	5.1%

Education level

• Less than 9th grade	3.90%
• High School, Non-grad	5.90%
• High School Graduate	30.10%
• Some College	18.60%
• Associate Degree	8.20%
• Bachelor's Degree	21.60%
• Grad Program/Degree	11.90%

Age groups

• 0 to 17	22%
• 18 to 34	18%
• 35 to 54	28%
• 55 and up	32%

Income level

• Less than \$25,000	14.30%
• \$25,000-\$44,999	15.10%
• \$45,000-\$74,999	19.90%
• \$75,000-\$124,999	23.20%
• \$125,000 or more	27.50%

Housing types

• Single Family Houses	67.70%
• Duplexes or Townhouses	12.30%
• 2 to 4 Units at Address	8.30%
• 5 to 9 Units at Address	5.10%
• 10 or More Units at Address	5.80%
• Mobile Homes	0.90%
• Boats, RVs, Vans	0.00%

Culture

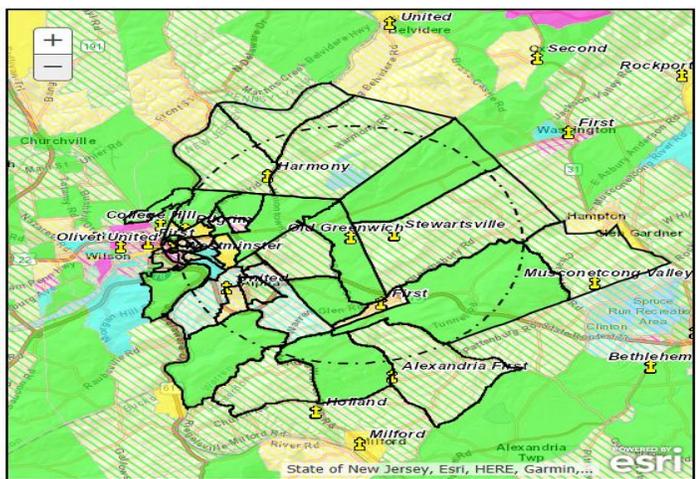
• Asian (non-Hispanic)	2.80%
• Black (non-Hispanic)	6.90%
• Hispanic	7.40%
• Native American (non-Hispanic)	0.00%
• Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic)	0.00%
• White (non-Hispanic)	81.10%
• Other	1.70%

Based on these demographics, the participants were asked to reflect on the following questions:

- How has the population change affected the congregation?
- What future trends do we need to anticipate?
- How does the family structure data match what you see in your neighborhood?
- How would we welcome new neighbors?
- What have we done in the past to welcome new neighbors?
- How do we meet the needs of families?

The following ideas were generated:

Learn techniques to become more welcoming through community and social outreach.	Establish ways to tell the community about mission work and other support provided by OGPC.
Better meet the needs of busy families involved and committed to other affiliations (sports, other community organizations).	Learn skills to converse about the church with neighbors to extend personal invitations to worship and other church activities.
Reach people who are not currently affiliated with a church or are seeking other spiritual opportunities.	Update our website and other communication to members and potential members.
Welcome more into the building through community and social outreach.	Increase our engagement with current members and invite past members back to the flock.



This map, based on the same data as above, shows age and family structure by local geography.

Observations by the Discernment Team from the Demographics Event

Although limited in cultural and racial diversity, the congregation of Old Greenwich otherwise generally reflects the overall demographics of this area. However, this fact brought the Discernment Team to the realization that there are categories of our demographics that are underserved. Programming that reflects the needs of all types of families, (single parents, same gender parents, dual income families, etc.) is an area that stands out. Identifying and meeting the needs of older couples, single people, different age groups and education levels through outreach, communication and service is another area to be improved. Encouraging a more culturally and racially diverse congregation is an important area for prayerful consideration. Seeking opportunities to share worship and social experiences with other congregations may be one way to explore these possibilities. More diversity would add to our already compassionate, empathic congregation and further enrich the overall church experience for congregants and encourage us to see more of who God is and who God loves. The congregation has some innovative ideas about programs that could serve these populations but strong leadership with a heart for experimentation would be a positive outcome in our next call.

Third Meeting: People/Places/Things Event

Attendance: Approximately 25

The meeting began with the Mission of the Seventy Dwelling in the Word exercise in Luke. Key ideas from that discussion include:

- How do we energize what's going on here? We especially want people to discover our belief in God's saving love and our efforts to follow Him as disciples, sharing that with others.
- Society has changed greatly, how would the mission of the 70 look in a modern setting?
- Remember that we have a lot to offer. It will take time and patience.

Who What Where Exercise

The participants then completed an exercise that listed where people go in society (to the mall, sports, restaurants) and what we do here at church (sing in the choir, have Sunday school). We then worked in pairs to determine how we could combine the two activities. Some of the ideas created are listed below:

- We could hold pilates or yoga classes before AA meetings or for the community in Memorial Hall.
- Have OGPC as a presence in the community, for example, participation in local community days.
- We could extend an invitation to worship for IHN families being hosted at the church facilities.
- Host a parent group and extend ministry to parents of the Greenwich Nursery School kids, located in the church's lower level.
- The choir could perform at community events and celebrations.
- We could hold worship services outside and/or Bible studies in more public locations.

Observations about People/Places/Things Event by the Discernment Team

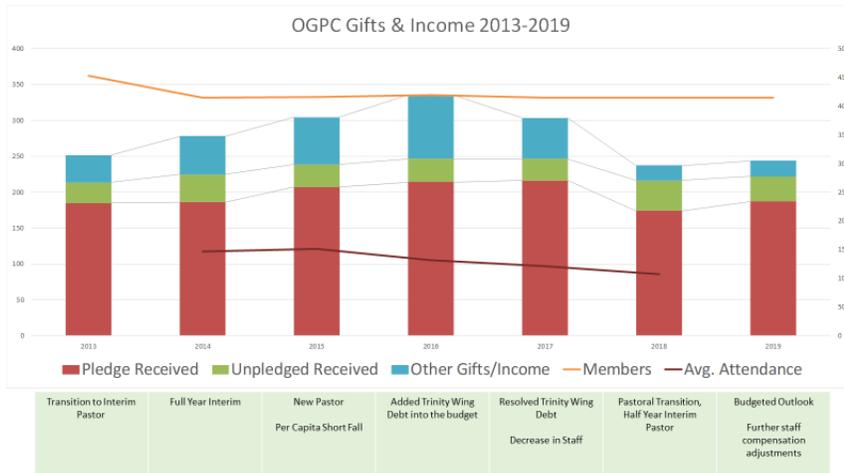
At this point in time, the congregation seems open to ideas of change, and eager for leadership to guide it forward. The membership and engagement team recently formed to increase attendance and membership will address this need. There is a strong commitment of involvement by the congregation in Church Education, Deacons, Session and various other committees and programs. As is the case with other churches, more involvement by the congregation is always welcomed and needed.

Fourth Meeting: Financial Discussion/Mission Statement Event

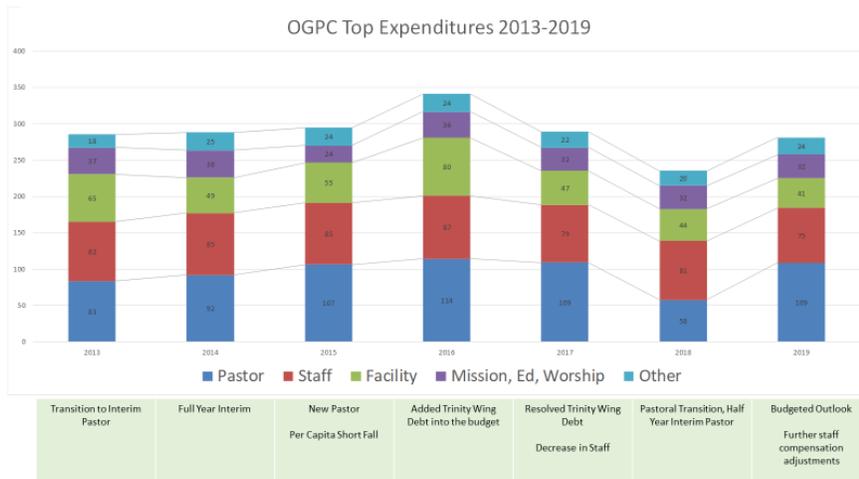
Attendance: approximately 20

Financial Outlook

The following charts were shared with attendees to provide an overview of giving, expenditures and membership/attendance.



Transition to Interim Pastor | Full Year Interim | New Pastor Per Capita Short Fall | Added Trinity Wing Debt into the budget | Resolved Trinity Wing Debt Decrease in Staff | Pastoral Transition, Half Year Interim Pastor | Budgeted Outlook Further staff compensation adjustments



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Key Findings from the Discernment Team regarding Finances

During the transition time we lost approximately 25% of our pledging units in both attendance and in financial commitment. This is partly due to changes in leadership, but these statistics are not unlike the challenge many other congregations are facing with attendance and commitments. After the pledge campaign of 2018, a resulting deficit budget was offset by a plea to the congregation to increase pledges that was answered with generosity. As of the writing of this report, and following the usually quiet summer season, the congregation is behind in meeting its pledged commitment. This matter will be addressed by the Discipleship team.

On a positive financial note, about 30 years ago OGPC received a large endowment from a member family. For several years, we borrowed money from the endowment to fund construction of Trinity Wing and over the

years, also offset decreases in giving by borrowing from the endowment for capital improvements and other needs. Five years ago, the congregation forgave itself the loan for Trinity Wing and committed to restoring the endowment to the original principal amount. As of this time, we have kept our commitment to not borrow the interest from the endowment and the original principal amount has been restored. Currently the endowment fund maintains over \$800,000 in assets.

In 2016, the Legacy of Faith Society was created to encourage people to pledge support to OGPC through estate planning including wills, endowments and other methods and as memorials to loved ones. This has given congregants a means of creating an enduring statement of faith to provide for the church or their favorite mission for years to come. Giving through the Legacy of Faith is commemorated by an artful display in the entry hall to the church. The piece, called the “Legacy Tree” designed and created by one of our members, shows our respect for the history and our commitment to the future of Old Greenwich.



Generating Mission Statement Ideas

To determine where God is calling us, the congregants participated in activity where their small groups discussed the following question: What will it look like when we’re doing our best work? Who will we be serving? What will we be doing? What impact will it have?

Key findings from this activity included:

- Outreach to young families, young adults and parts of the population not currently involved.
- Intentional ministry with older adults.
- More diversity of members; people who aren’t like us.
- Serving others outside the walls of the church with the impact of sharing our faith. For example, with the mission garden, inviting people in the neighborhood to help in the garden.
- To reach new people to feed souls and provide hope in the promises of God.

These ideas were put into a Word Cloud generator with the result:



Mission Statement

As a result of this congregational event and subsequent discussions, a new mission statement for OGPC has emerged:

“To Celebrate the Love of God in All We Say and Do”

We believe that this statement reflects the current understanding of how God is calling OGPC. It is a call to action, a call to repent, an expression of joy, an acknowledgment that we know we are undeserving receivers of the great gift of God’s love, and a centering principle of our lives as individuals and as a group of believers. It is also a statement of behavior about how we intend to interact with others, and more. It defines a behavioral goal that requires constant personal devotion and improvement to achieve.

The general sense from this series of meetings is that God is calling us into wider and bolder service in the community. In this session, the congregation grappled with the fact that OGPC is located in a somewhat isolated area. It was recognized that this makes it more challenging to attract the attention of the community. There are opportunities to be more visible in the community through our current programs (such as the Mission Garden), but the congregation understands that we must develop new ways to serve the community. Informing the community about the various ways that we provide Christian support and service is necessary.

Another area of improvement identified as necessary is a wider outreach using contemporary communication streams including social media. We currently stream our Sunday worship service via Facebook, but we need to explore other ways to keep people connected using current technology. Increasing community awareness of our presence and mission using these avenues was a need that was identified throughout the various congregational meetings.



“What if we re-defined Christian Mission to be the task of accompaniment – standing with partners in our communities and around the world who have committed themselves to resist the inhumanity of Empire and practices of domination that impede Jesus’ vision of what real community can look like?” Rick Ufford-Chase

Where God is calling OGPC

The Discernment Team has acted as a collector and assembler of data for the congregation regarding OGPC's past, present and possible future in service to God. It has been an honor to assist the church in this important work. When the Pastor Nominating Committee is elected and prayerfully moves forward in the selection of a new pastor, the Discernment Team humbly suggests the following strengths and opportunities for growth be considered.

Our Current Response (Strengths)

Our connectedness to each other. Our relationships with each other combined with our openness to new members is a strength of OGPC. Our ability to connect to each other and provide comfort and inspiration has drawn members to OGPC for many years. Each Sunday members announce Joys and Concerns sharing both burdens and celebrations. It is a special time of sharing. The weekly prayer list is another way that we communicate with each other about our lives. Sermons shared on Facebook, as well as other church events help to connect with those who may not be able to attend in person. Special dinners, social events, fellowship after church, women's and men's groups, youth groups and church picnics are just a sample of the activities that develop and support our church family. OGPC is a congregation that cares about and for each other and truly enjoys being together.

Our worship experience, our music and Christian Education programming are strengths of this congregation. During the discernment process, congregants have noted being inspired by sermons and uplifted by the music of the choir. Christian Education, the dedicated Sunday School volunteers and the Confirmation class activities provide a firm foundational experience and relationship with God for our youth.

Our willingness to take on new initiatives in response to events in society. Two initiatives have been taken on as a direct result of important issues of the day. The Safety and Security team was developed in concert with our local law enforcement to provide a safer place for people to worship, work and engage in other activities. This included creating a plan for medical emergencies, coordinating with police and first responders, training ushers for emergency situations, and updating fire protection in the church so that congregants may be free to worship God safely and comfortably. To address climate change concerns and how that can be seen through the lens of Christianity, an Adult Bible study was held that explored Bible passages on the stewardship of God's creation. This resulted in an Environmental Action Team that explores ways that Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church can reduce its impact on the environment. As an example, we recently replaced Styrofoam with more environmentally friendly Old Greenwich mugs. The Safety team and the Environmental team initiatives were created and driven by our members, and we are thankful for their unique skill sets and dedication to serving God.

Local Mission Outreach is another strength of OGPC. Volunteers that bring breakfast lunch and dinner to IHN/Family Promise families provide fellowship, comfort and sustenance to families experiencing homelessness in the area. The Mission Garden provides fresh local produce to food insecure areas of the community. Volunteers support both missions, even involving Sunday school children to harvest the vegetables. This is an important part of our action in service to Christ. Members of OGPC have long been faithfully involved in the Meals on Wheels program as well.

Areas of Opportunity for Growth (Weaknesses)

New ministry ideas that will attract new members and a more diverse population. Ministries that support families of all kinds including single parent, same-gender and dual income. As society changes and the challenges facing families change, program offerings must change as well. The congregation has discerned the need for ministry to older adults as well as singles in the area. Also, programming that appeals to a diversity of cultures is an area of opportunity for the next pastor. Reconnecting with former members is an area of opportunity, as is connecting with those with no formal faith tradition. In the recent past OGPC offered a variety of Sunday worship experiences including a Praise Band that was particularly appreciated by younger adult members. Session and the Pastor should again consider alternatives to traditional Presbyterian liturgy.

A more visible presence in the larger community through communication, a presence at community days, and/or mission work that shows who we are and what we do. Our geographical location provides a unique opportunity for OGPC. Because of our proximity to the state line, as well as the multiple townships that surround us, we have an opportunity to participate in a variety of community celebrations as well as opportunities for mission. Recently, a group from the church organized by the Environmental Team participated in a tree planting in a nearby town. Opportunities like these to be more visible in our mission work, locally, nationally and even world-wide, would be greatly valued.

A re-energization of youth activities, especially middle and high school youth. There are a number of reasons for the need for growth in this area: the ever-increasing demands from other priorities in youth lives including sports, clubs and homework combined with an increasingly secular society, to name a few. Changes in leadership in church and competing priorities within OGPC have led to inconsistent efforts to grow ministry in this area. We recognize this and recognize the importance of this outreach. Our recent installed pastor devoted considerable time and effort to the youth group and confirmation class. The youth responded enthusiastically. We have recently combined with other youth groups in the area to enhance program and opportunity for the youth and we are hopeful for continued growth in this area. Recently, the Interim Pastor has committed to personally leading the confirmation class.

Development of opportunities for adults and new leadership. As the congregation ages, it is important to identify new leaders and assist in their growth. OGPC congregants are diverse professionally and offer all sorts of gifts and talents. Identifying those unique aptitudes and fostering stewardship is important as we move forward. Spiritual development for all adults would also be welcome including opportunities for Bible study, topical discussion groups or other ways that foster faith and connection.

Using contemporary technology for communication, including an updated, living website. OGPC has a Facebook page and live streams services to Facebook. There may be opportunities to use additional platforms to communicate news, announcements and events. A website that reflects current goings on at the church is an area for development. Many people find a church by first searching online so developing and maintaining that we have an up to date digital footprint is important. Identifying other means of communication to engage members who travel, are homebound or can't physically make it to church but want to stay in touch is important.

Suggested Qualities for Next Pastor

In seeking our next pastor, we are looking for someone who can reach out in new ways and who can provide intellectual and spiritual energy and leadership to help us reach our goals. In addition to this, we pray for and hope to call a pastor with the following qualities:

Preaching and Leading Worship

- Is a person of faith who lives and leads by the Word
- Is creative and will offer a variety of worship opportunities to meet the spiritual needs of the congregants
- Is able to connect current issues with Biblical stories for worship experiences that are relevant and timely
- Is a dynamic speaker, able to deliver sermons that are moving and educational
- Enjoys music and understands its importance in the worship service and to this congregation and its history

Relationships

- Is patient, nurturing and non-judgmental in nature
- Is able to work collaboratively with committees and staff members, fostering a spirit of teamwork
- Provides pastoral care to individuals and groups and is able to create personal connections with congregants
- Can provide counsel to congregants and relate to the needs of a variety of ages and stages of life
- Can identify future leaders and foster their leadership abilities
- Will be visible and present in the community, representing OGPC in service
- Will establish roots in the area and commit to a future with OGPC to reestablish continuity in leadership.

Leadership

- Will provide guidance, direction, and inspiration when creating and assisting with plans for the future.
- Can prioritize goals and strategize ways for moving forward towards growth and stability
- Inspires lay leadership, sees possibilities, encourages and is willing to experiment with means of worship, stewardship and ministry
- Is able to adapt when problems arise, working with others to move forward in faith.

We respectfully submit these suggestions and trust in God's way forward for Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Our Future

Biblical Foundation

When you visit Old Greenwich Presbyterian church and speak with members of the church, you will witness Christian love through our welcoming comportment and kindness. This is truly a friendly church open to a diversity of ideas. And we know that as this society changes, we must be open to change that enhances our ability to do the work of God in this society. Evident in the discernment process was a desire for the congregation to “spread our wings” in the community. Even more deeply than an increase in members, the congregation truly wants to spread the good news of the Gospel in the community. The congregants understand that the hope and comfort during hard times God offers us is meant to be shared with everyone. Congregants shared phrases like “Friendship and refuge, provide healing”, “hope with faith, hope through darkness, hope through suffering, hope through stress, hope through prayer”, and “feed souls.” These hopes are a reflection of what congregants have gained from their relationships with OGPC and their relationship with God and God’s Word, that bring comfort, hope, refuge and fellowship.

OGPC as a congregation, believes that we are called to share our spiritual gifts, love God and one another, and carry God’s love to our community and to the world through service and mission. “Love your neighbor as yourself” is central to our identity as a congregation, inspiring our inclusivity and openness to be a diverse congregation. We vary in how we respond to social issues, as all congregations do. And we acknowledge and respect that some conversations among friends and family seem now more difficult than in the past. We also vary in our backgrounds, favorite faith traditions and personal beliefs. Yet as a congregation, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and are brought together by our common aim: to honor and worship God in these increasingly secular times. We are called to mission, and like many churches find ourselves as individuals having not as much time to give to service as we would like. The congregation is centered by John 15:5, “I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit: for you can do nothing without me.” Our recent history has shown us that we are determined, and with God’s help, will find ways to continue our service to God, the people in our community, and God’s world through our connection to the larger PC(USA).

Our Mission

The congregation of OGPC fully embraces its responsibility to bring the word of God into the community and world. We look to be inspired and unified in our shared mission:

“To Celebrate the Love of God in All We Say and Do”

And so, with the leadership of a new pastor and secure in God’s love and guidance, OGPC approaches the unknown future with commitment that God’s will be done and that as God’s people, we can witness the power and glory of God through our own actions. In doing so, we will celebrate the love of God in all we say and do.