



SUNNYVALE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MISSION STUDY REPORT UPDATE

February 2019

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Purpose of this Update

In October 2015, Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church (SVPC) approved a Mission Study Report (MSR) in anticipation of the search for a new head of staff. The Ministry Renewal Team that developed that report used a very thorough process of focus group meetings, surveys, and prayerful reflection.

The 2019 Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) carefully reviewed the 2015 report and met with members of the Ministry Renewal Team that developed it. The APNC also sought input on the 2015 MSR from the program staff and from the Session at its 2019 retreat. The APNC concluded that the 2015 report still provides accurate and useful information about SVPC. On the other hand, the APNC also concluded that much has changed from 2015 to 2019, both inside and outside SVPC. Shortly after reaching this conclusion, the Session formally requested the APNC to prepare this report update. It is intended to supplement the 2015 MSR and to be read in conjunction with it.

The content of this report describes our vision and hopes for the future of SVPC from today's perspective. It updates data that describe SVPC and our wider community. It provides more detailed information on three areas of ministry focus—discipleship, welcome and hospitality, and young adults—for which the new associate pastor is expected to provide leadership. Finally, it discusses the changes that have occurred over the last four years, which has been a time of transition for SVPC.

Our Vision

The APNC reaffirms the vision for SVPC as articulated in the 2015 report:

Our vision is to be a growing church that is spiritually alive to God and actively caring for others. This vision sets us on a journey, calling us:

- *To worship Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior*
- *To respond to the needs of the people through caring ministries of healing and hope*
- *To celebrate our diversity of perspective while affirming our unity in Christ*
- *And, through the Holy Spirit, to grow in our discovery of God and our mission in the world.*

We pursue this vision with creativity and imagination, enjoying laughter, extending compassion, all to make God's love relevant and fresh.

Our Hopes for the Future

Our congregation puts hope in a future that shows us to be a growing, thriving community—in spirituality, mission, and membership. As our surrounding community and world evolve and change, we ask ourselves how to listen for God's call. As we discern that call, we desire to strengthen our existing ministries, move in new directions, and respond in our individual and collective lives. We listen and respond to local and global needs related to hunger, poverty, and homelessness. This committee senses an emerging focus on local and global needs related to hunger and homelessness, striving to respond to calls for social justice, including racism, concerns of the LGBTQ community, refugees, the environment, and conditions affecting the elderly.

As we seek to discern God’s call for our future, we want to continue to celebrate who we are, acknowledging our successes, strengths, and traditions. Building on a solid foundation of discipleship and spiritual growth will allow us to reach outside our walls to deepen connections within our community and expand our ministry.

We desire transformation, guidance, inspiration, and mentoring to grow in our understanding of what it means to follow Christ. As we stay rooted in our traditions, we also know that we must step up and out to respond to God’s calls for us. The changing dynamics of our community and world feed our desire to be better able to connect with others of diverse backgrounds, traditions, and needs. We seek to be equipped to take risks to share God’s love generously with our neighbors. We wish to be rooted in Christ and reaching out in love.

Our Members and Attendees

The church’s membership is currently 813 individuals. Attendance at the three worship services averages 433, with about 53 attending the 7:50 a.m. contemplative service (called Early Light), about 295 attending the 10 a.m. traditional service, and about 85 attending the 5 p.m. contemporary service (called Intersections). Approximately 38% of attendees are non-members. Average worship attendance has declined since 2015, when it was 492.

Figure 1: SVPC service attendance by age group (years) Figure 1 shows the percentages of members and regular attendees in each age group, broken out by the services attended.

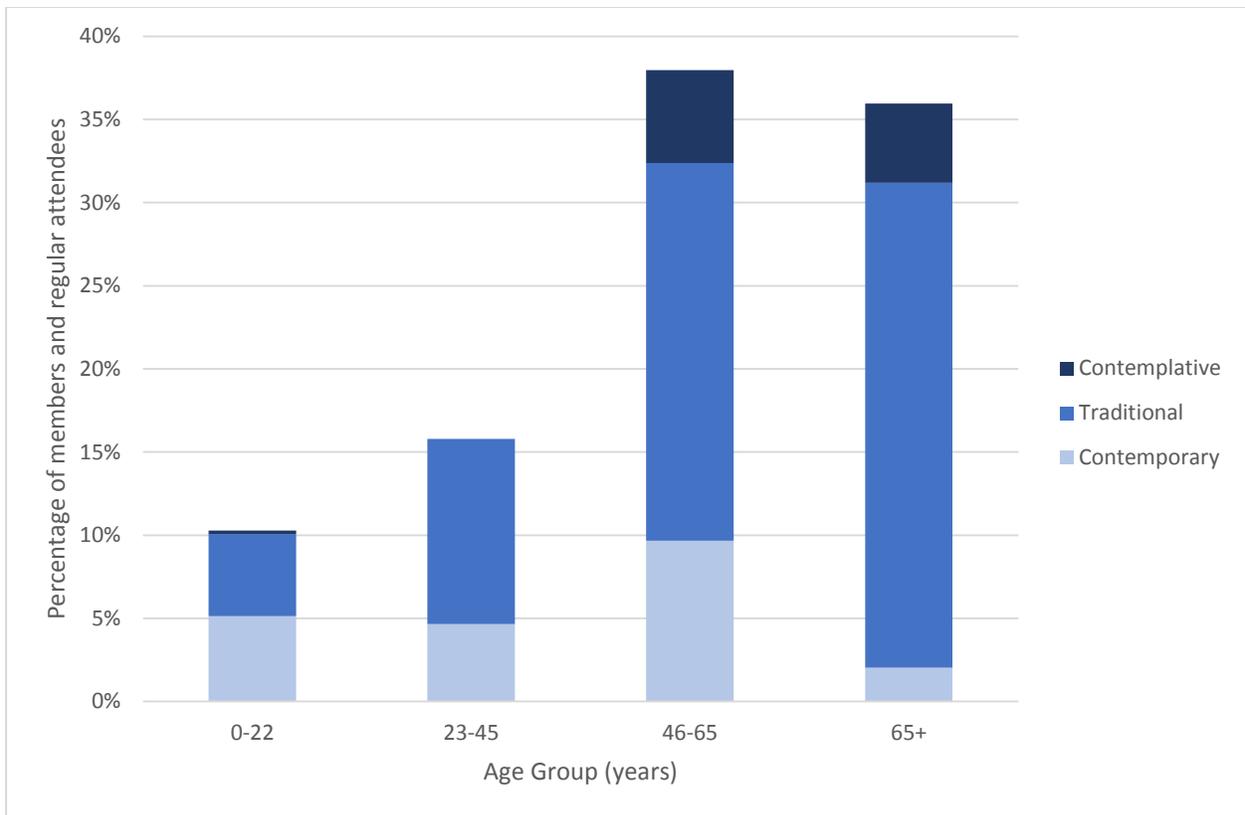


Figure 1: SVPC service attendance by age group (years)

Approximately 61% of members and regular attendees are female. The ethnic makeup of the congregation is predominantly white, but the congregation includes Asian, Asian-Indian, Black, Latino, and Filipino attendees.

Figure 2 shows the cities of residence of our members and regular attendees.

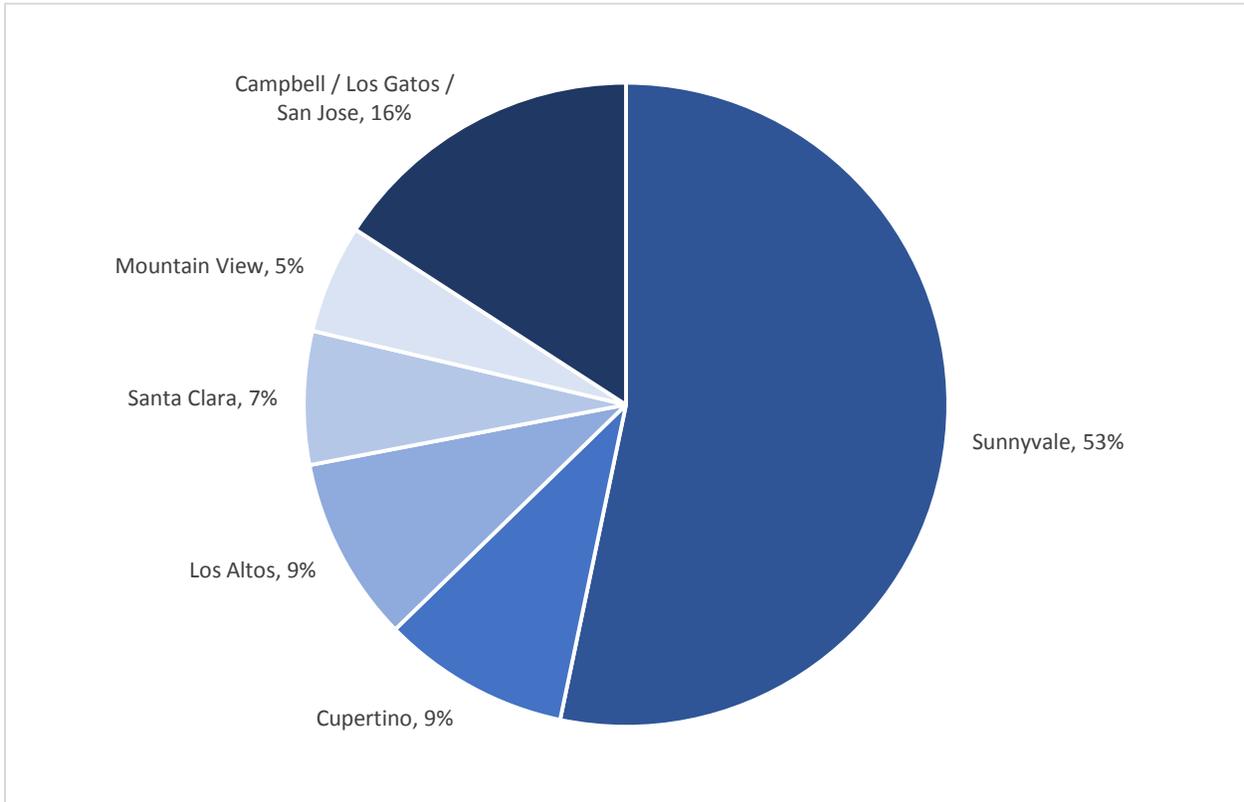


Figure 2: SVPC members and regular attendees by city of residence

Our Wider Community

To better understand the community in which SVPC is located, the APNC requested and received a MissionInsite report on the demographics of the geographic area within a ten-mile radius of the Church campus.

Our surrounding community is significantly younger than our congregants. The age demographics shown in Figure 3 indicate the need to increase our efforts to attract and minister to young adults and families.

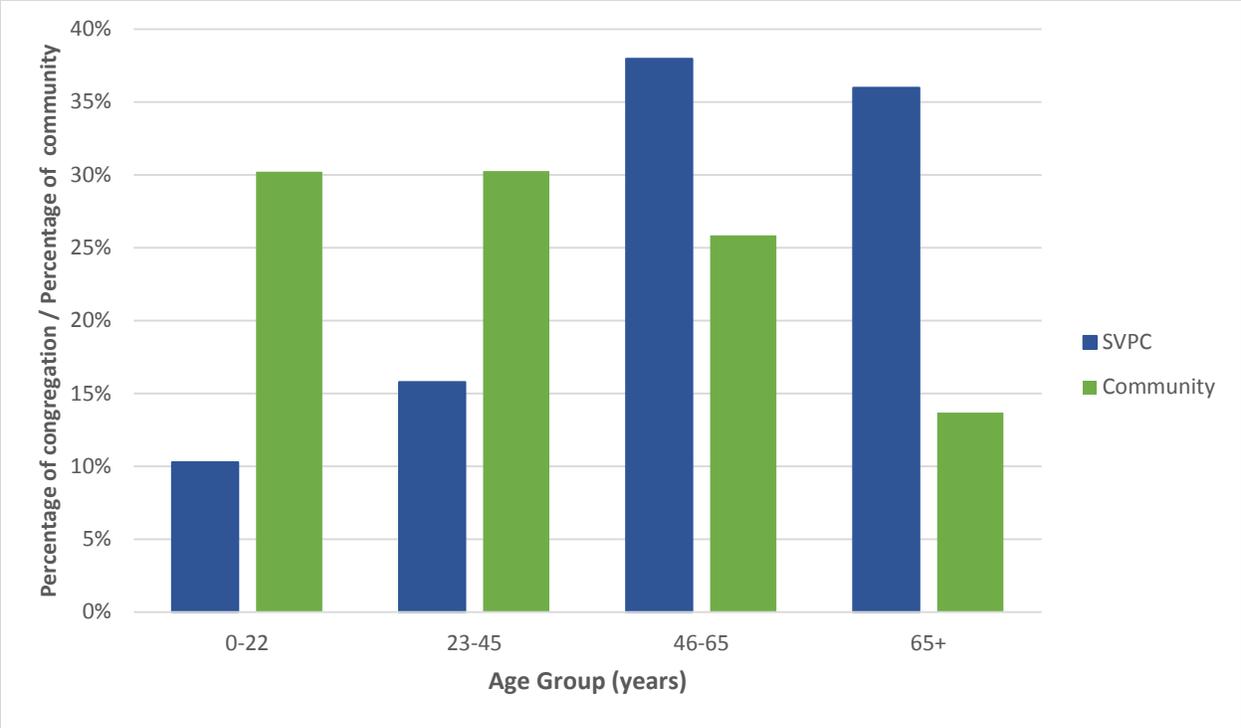


Figure 3: Age demographics of Congregants against the wider community

Our wider community is very diverse ethnically. Although SVPC does not maintain ethnic data for members and attenders, anyone attending one of our services would observe that we are not as diverse as our community (Figure 4). As indicated in the 2015 MSR, we strive to both increase the ethnic diversity of our congregants and deepen cross-cultural relationships with other churches and community groups.

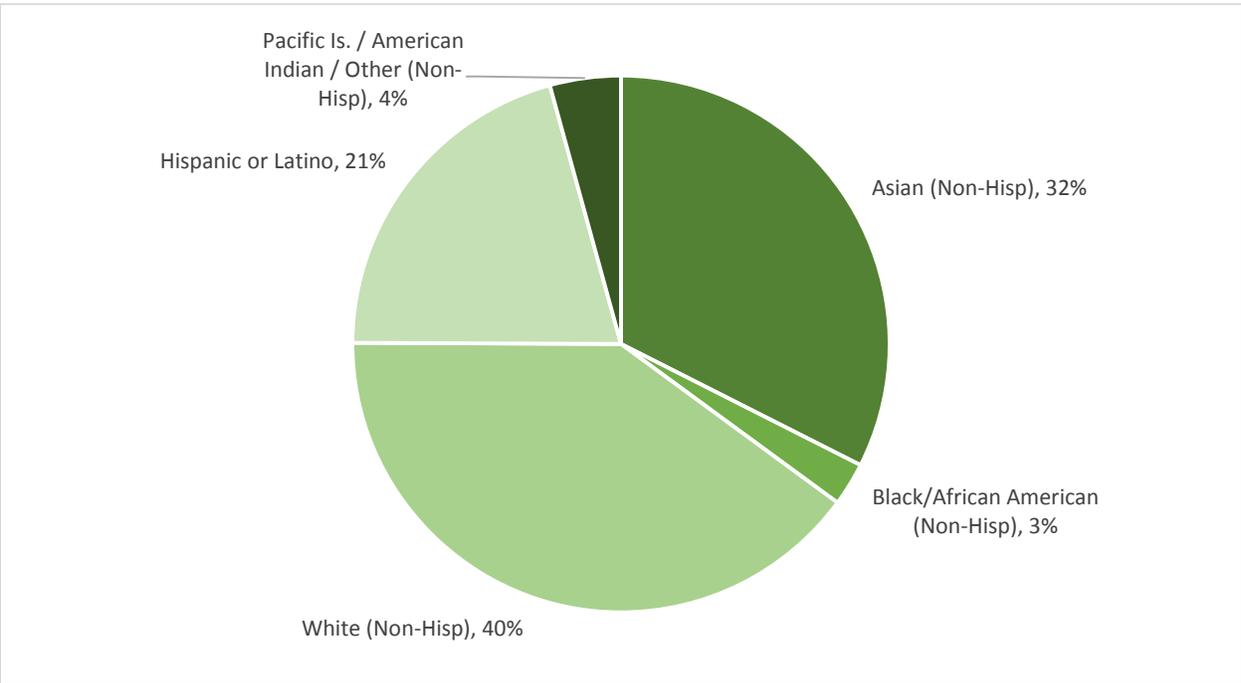


Figure 4: Wider community by Ethnicity

Data from the Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study (Figure 5) suggests the religious diversity of our area. This data compares the religious preferences of the United States population with those of the population in the San Francisco metro area. Although Sunnyvale is not in the San Francisco standard metropolitan statistical area, its religious profile is almost certainly much closer to San Francisco’s than to that of the United States as a whole. Most noteworthy in this data is the much smaller percentage of mainline Protestants in this area and the larger percentage of persons who are atheist, agnostic, and nothing in particular. The religious profile of our area offers both challenges and opportunities.

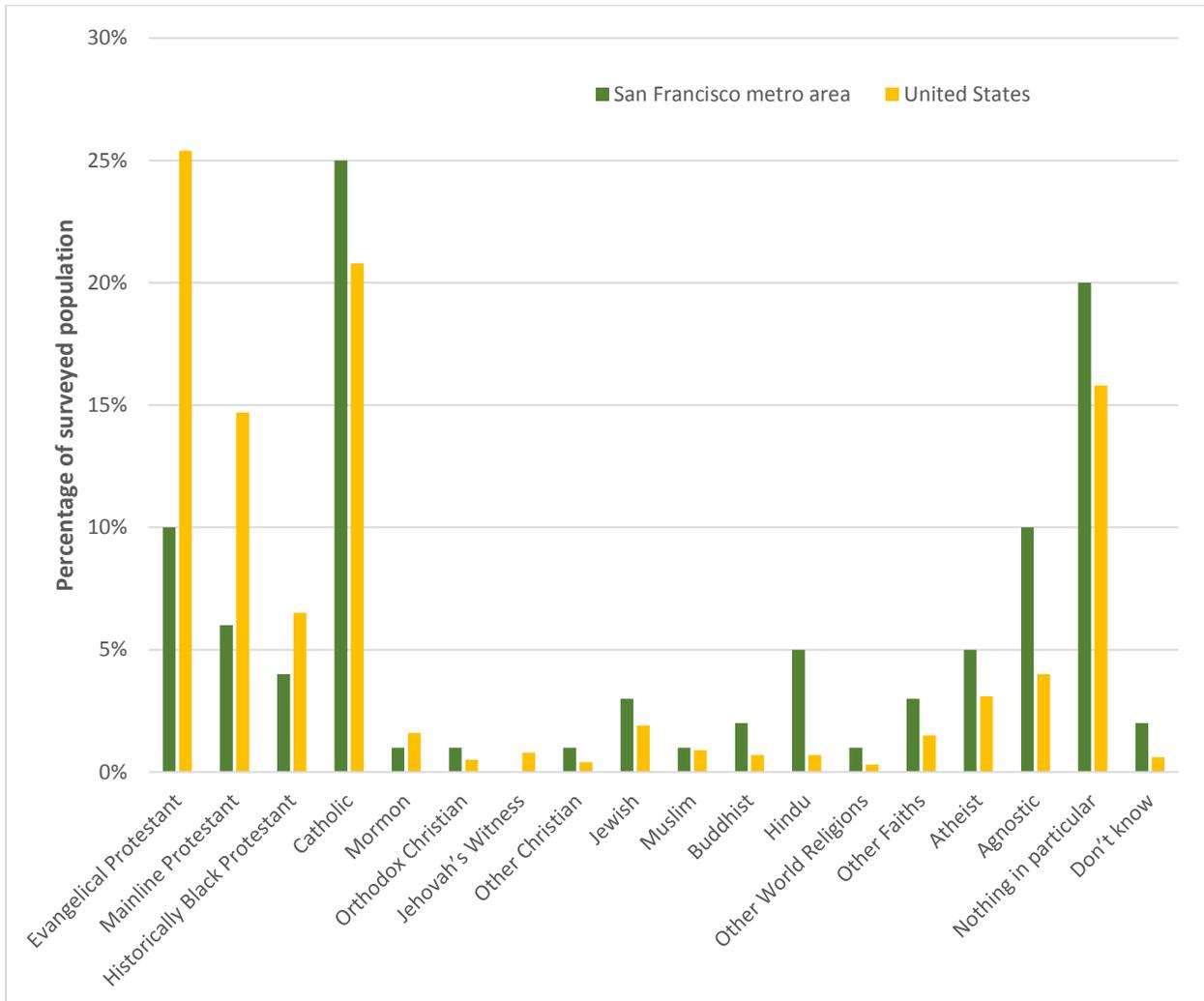


Figure 5: Religious composition of adults in the San Francisco metro area and United States

Relevant Ministry Areas

This section provides a current description of three areas of ministry focus—discipleship, welcome and hospitality, and young adults—for which the new associate pastor is expected to provide leadership. The specific challenges in each are candidly shared to highlight the immediate need for a new associate pastor and provide insight into the responsibilities and opportunities of the successful candidate.

Discipleship

The Discipleship ministry area includes various programs: adult learning, the library, church camp, Presbyterian Women (PW), women's ministry, men's ministry, young adult ministry, and small groups. There is a great deal of activity in some of these areas, and very little in others. All would benefit from consistent staff leadership and support.

Adult learning utilizes the talent within SVPC, occasionally supplemented by outside speakers, to provide adult classes. In 2018, classes were offered on 28 Sunday mornings; attendance at these classes totaled more than 800 contact hours. We also conducted half-day retreats during Lent and before Advent, a special Lenten presentation, a seminar on preparation for death, a public lecture on faith and vocation, and a new Bible study between the Sunday morning services. These accounted for another 500 contact hours.

As proposed by the new head of staff, the Discipleship and Mission & Service ministries have sponsored a series of Community Conversations, several of which have featured videos produced by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance followed by panel discussions. Topics have included gun violence, disaster relief, and immigration detention; panelists have included our member of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Sunnyvale director of public safety, and representatives of community action groups. The most recent Community Conversation featured Dr. Reggie Williams from McCormick Theological Seminary, discussing his book, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*. It was held at Emmanuel Baptist Church, a predominantly Black church in San Jose.

Presbyterian Women has become more active recently, adding a new circle to study mission work in Indonesia and sponsoring a presentation by mission co-workers from Indonesia, who spoke about Muslim-Christian relations. PW also sponsored a lecture on racism and is planning a day-long conference on issues related to aging.

The main activities for both women's ministry and men's ministry are annual retreats. Church camp is a beloved annual event, but changing life styles appear to make its traditional camping model unsustainable. The library is well maintained and managed, but use of its materials is declining.

Although assigned to Discipleship, small groups function without guidance or support from Discipleship or Church staff. They played a greater role in the life of the Church at some time in the past. At the retreat in which Session members provided input to the APNC on the 2015 MSR, several elders emphasized the need to revitalize small groups.

Welcome & Hospitality

The Welcome & Hospitality ministry area strives to provide a friendly, welcoming face when someone walks into our church. This ministry offers hospitality to all who enter SVPC.

Welcome & Hospitality staffs a welcome booth and provides coffee each Sunday after the 10 a.m. service. It provides refreshments and staffs welcome booths at other events throughout the year, including Vacation Bible School, the spring and winter Choir Concerts, and the fall Presbyterian Early Learning Center (PELC) welcome event. Welcome & Hospitality has also supported the Mission & Service ministry by staffing the registration booth and providing dinner for the Mobile Pack/Feed My Starving Children event.

Welcome & Hospitality frequently provides financial support and servers for Church gatherings. These include Early Light breakfasts, summer community dinners, Lenten dinners, Choir Concert receptions, the annual Soup and Sing, and hot cocoa around the fire pit on Christmas Eve.

Welcome & Hospitality is responsible for the annual Church picnic. In 2018, it moved the picnic date to the fall and collaborated with the PELC and the Music School to attract more families. The Music School provided musical entertainment, and PELC offered crafts and other activities for children. As a result, attendance increased substantially and included many children and their families who live nearby but are not otherwise involved in the Church. The same was true for the annual Easter Egg Hunt and Halloween Trunk-or-Treat events supported by Welcome & Hospitality.

Welcome & Hospitality is discussing how it might move beyond welcoming those who choose to visit SVPC and reach out to attract new congregants. The ministry area is particularly interested in reaching out to groups who are underrepresented in our congregation, including young adults and those who would add ethnic diversity. There was support for these initiatives at the Session retreat.

Young Adults

The 2015 MSR noted “tremendous recognition” that it is imperative to attract and integrate young adults into our congregation. Survey responses from people of all ages agreed that this is a priority and is essential to the future of our ministry.

Within the limited time available in his busy schedule, the new head of staff has given increased attention to young adult ministry. He and a deacon have organized quarterly social activities and a five-session study. About 40 young adults are involved to some extent, but only about a dozen regularly attend events. Regular contact is maintained by email.

The biggest impediment to success in this ministry area is the lack of consistent staff support, which all hope will be remedied by the addition of the new associate pastor. Other obstacles include young adults’ busy work and personal schedules and different interests of those with children and those without children.

2015-2019: A Time of Transition

Even in normal times, SVPC is located in a dynamic area at a dynamic time in history. Change—and often rapid change—is the norm for Silicon Valley. Even in normal times, this climate of change presents both challenges and opportunities.

The times we now live in are far from normal. Epidemics of homelessness, opioid abuse, gun violence, and wildfires beset us. Wars and rumors of wars take lives and divert resources. Job, food, and health insecurity are daily concerns for many. Because of our geographic location, we are particularly aware of the pain that has resulted from changes in immigration enforcement.

Fear is a natural response to the many real problems that exist in our society and our world. That fear has been exacerbated and manipulated for political gain at the national level. People are encouraged to divide into “them” and “us” and to see every issue as a matter of survival.

SVPC is not immune from the effects of these challenging times, nor do we wish to be. We recognize that it is even more difficult than usual to talk about matters on which people disagree. Some want to avoid the discussion altogether, hoping that church can provide escape from the problems of the world. Others want more attention and response to societal needs. We strive, first and foremost, to do God's will, but as we try to discern God's will, we also strive to love and respect each other.

While all this change is transpiring outside the church, SVPC has experienced what is perhaps the most fundamental change in the life of a church, turnover in the position of head of staff. The previous head of staff served 24 years and was succeeded for about 18 months by a very effective interim head of staff. When Rev. Hardy Kim became the new head of staff in July 2017, he was greeted enthusiastically, but inevitably faced comparisons with both the beloved long-time pastor and the respected interim.

Rev. Kim has challenged SVPC to have a greater outward focus than it has had in the past. As one elder put it during the Session retreat, we have moved from a challenge to listen to a challenge to act. This focus is unsettling for some, in part because the challenge is to engage with a world in which fear is both real and manufactured.

Other staff changes are in process. Searches are currently underway for a youth director and for a recently created part-time coordinator position to support our Mission & Service ministry.

As we understand is normal when there is turnover in the head of staff, there has been some decline in our financial condition. We anticipated a budget deficit at the end of the current fiscal year, but the actual deficit is substantially smaller than expected. A more substantial deficit is expected for the next fiscal year, resulting primarily from a 10% drop in pledging units and income. We believe the congregation will faithfully respond to the financial needs of the Church, as it has throughout the extended period of transition.

While some of the changes during this period of transition are challenging, we are optimistic for the future. The outward focus that Rev. Kim has emphasized is consistent with the vision set forth in the 2015 MSR. It reaches out to the diverse community in which we are located. It promises to give SVPC a greater role in carrying out God's mission in our troubled world.

From social media to self-driving cars, the future of the world is shaped here in Silicon Valley. We live in a community of almost unparalleled influence, diversity, talent, and wealth. Luke 12:48 tells us that "from everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded." We welcome that challenge.

2019 Associate Pastor Nominating Committee:

Kevin Coolidge, Matt Higgins, Gail McCaffrey, Bethann Merriam, Debbie Stoddard, Barry Vickrey, and Val Weirauch