

Mission Study Report

For

**United Presbyterian Church
375 Van Houten Street,
Paterson, NJ 07501**

**Prepared on September 24, 2012
by the Mission Study committee:
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WHO ARE WE

United Presbyterian Church (U.P.C.) (formerly Church of the Redeemer and Church of the Messiah has been part of the community of Paterson since it opened its Sunday school class doors for the first time on May 11, 1886. Since then, it has been sharing the Word of Christ, and witnessing to the community in the form of worship, adult and children's' Sunday school, a youth mentoring program, recreational programs, and service.

The name United Presbyterian Church was borne out of the merger of the Church of the Messiah/Redeemer, Central Presbyterian and Madison Avenue Presbyterian churches in 1991. At the time of the merger the church boasted a diverse population ranging from Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American. Currently African Americans, Caribbean Americans make up the majority of the church body.

At U.P.C., the typical Sunday worship a traditional one with a contemporary flair, both in style and music. We honor Christ's goodness and rely on the presence of the Holy Spirit by in all we do. In addition the compliments are incessant regarding the historic edifice which is said to be one of the most beautiful sanctuaries of any church in the area. The graceful flowing lines of the angelic figures carved in the high-vaulted ceiling make them appear ready to swoop down to protect the congregation from trouble and despair. The ceiling of the sanctuary is an exact copy of Westminster Hall in London, England (<http://upc-paterson.org/414603.ihtml>). We believe that Christ's presence is in the sacraments, and we place great value on the Biblical

preaching, and we strive to apply the Word to our Daily lives. A typical Sunday morning worship service will consist of a mixture of young and old, male and female, congregant and visitor, all coming together for the special anointing from the Holy Spirit.

U.P.C., conveniently located at the corner of Broadway (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way) and Graham Avenue (Rosa Parks Boulevard) in Paterson, is just several blocks from the downtown area and is easily accessible from all surrounding highways and freeways.

Currently the total membership is 126 (113 active adults and 13 active youths). The majority of our members come mostly from the Paterson area, with others commuting from surrounding towns and counties. We also have members who have retired and are now residing in other states such Pennsylvania, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia, and in the island of Jamaica. The city of Paterson is made up of a diverse group of people ranging from African American, Whites, Hispanics/Latino, Afro-Caribbean, African, Indian, Indo-Caribbean, Pilipino, and others.

THE COMMUNITY AROUND US

Within a one-mile radius of 375 Van Houten Street the current population is approximately 71,569, and it is projected that within the next 5 years the population will see a negative growth of 0.5 percent. The most significant group in terms of numbers and comparison to national averages in this study area is the *Millenials* (age 11 to 30) who make up 30.1% of the total population in the area compared to 27.3% of the U.S. population as a whole. The average household income is approximately

\$39,000.00 per year, compared with that population in the rest of the US which is \$66,000.00. Therefore, based on this average household income and the likely contribution behavior in the area, the overall religious giving potential can be described as very low.

The average age among this population is 33.3. As is the case in the rest of the country the Based on the total number of different groups present, the racial/ethnic diversity in the area is very high. Among individual groups whites represent 3% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up a substantial 96.7% which is well above the national average of 37%. The largest of these groups, Hispanics/Latino account for 59% of the total population. They are projected to be the fastest growing racial/ethnic group, increasing by nearly 6% between 2012 and 2017. The largest lifestyle group in this region is that of the ethnic and urban diversity which accounts for 90.9% of the households in this area. The top individual segment is *Struggling Black Households* representing 31.7% of all households.

Twenty six percent of this population is of households with no faith involvement, 64% is single family households, and based on the number of years completed, and college enrollment, the overall education level is extremely low. While 65% of the overall population aged 25 and over have graduated high school as compared to the national average of 85.1%, college graduates in this area account for only 8% of those over 25 versus 27.8% in the U.S.

According to Percept Group, this area can be described as extremely non-traditional due to the below average presence of married persons and two-parent families. Of the total population, 52% is categorized as single (never married); 14% categorized as divorced or widowed, and 34% as married. It was gleaned from the Percept Group compilation that concerns which are likely to exceed the national average in this area include: *Racial/Ethnic Prejudice, Affordable Housing, Neighborhood Crime and Safety, Social Injustice, Employment Opportunities and Abusive Relationships*. As an overall category, concerns related to *Community Problems* are the most significant based on the total number of households and comparison to national averages. (See box 1 below).

Box 1

Households By Primary Concerns Group	The Basics	Family Problems	Community Problems	Hopes and Dreams	Spiritual/Personal
Study Area	27%	11%	20%	25%	14%
U.S. AVERAGE	24%	11%	16%	30%	15%

Additionally, conditions which can contribute to placing an area at risk (particularly the children) are at an overall critically high level. Consider the following statistics:

Box 2

Regionally Indexed Stress Conditions (RISC)	Households Below Poverty (\$15,000)	Households with Children: Single Mothers	Adult Pop.: High School Dropouts	Primary Concerns: The Basics	Primary Concerns: Family Problems	Primary Concerns: Community Problems
Study Area	27%	54%	35%	27%	11%	20%
U.S. AVERAGE	13%	26%	15%	24%	11%	16%

The evidence is clear when note is taken that on the whole, the area is well above average in the characteristics known to

contribute to community problems such as households below the poverty line, adults without a high school diploma, households with a single mother and usually high concern about issues such as community problems, family problems and/or basic necessities such as food, housing and jobs.

According to the statistics, households in this study group prefer an overall church style which is both traditional and contemporary (see box 3).

Box 3

Households By Church Styles Preferences	Worship: Traditional	Music: Traditional	Architecture: Traditional	Worship: Contemporary	Music: Contemporary	Architecture: Contemporary
Study Area	16%	22%	25%	21%	17%	14%
U.S. AVERAGE	20%	24%	27%	26%	20%	16%

Coincidentally, the statistic states that the church programs which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Spiritual Retreats, Food Pantry/Clothing Resources, Twelve-Step Programs and Care for the Terminally ILL.*

As an overall category, programs related to *Spiritual Development* are the most significant based on total number of households and comparison to the national averages (box 4).

Box 4

Households By Church Program Preference Category	Spiritual Development	Personal Development	Community/Social Services	Recreation
Study Area	28%	8%	23%	36%
U.S. AVERAGE	25%	10%	20%	38%

(<http://www.link2lead.com/MyCommunity/10Facts.aspx?Report=S>);

(<http://www.link2lead.com/PDF/download.aspx?temp=true&menu=MyComm&name=PPc.pdf&oid=398372&uid=471691>)

WHAT WE DO

At United Presbyterian, in addition to regular Sunday worship we offer or host a variety of special events and activities listed below.

- Youth Empowered for Success and Service (YESS)
 - Adult-supervised weekly youth group gathering to foster and nurture the youth in spirit growth and friendship through praise and worship, liturgical dancing, and worship service involvement.

- Sunday School Classes (all age-groups up to adult)
 - Meets at 9:30 am to 10:30 am September to June
 - End of June one-week Vacation Bible School
 - Occasional worship service involvement particularly on the 5th Sunday of the month (Youth Sunday).

- Safe Space Summer Camp
 - We offer a Christ centered, safe and comfortable environment where community children between the ages of 6 to 12 can spend their summer days. They attend exciting outings, engage in fun learning activities. The extended morning and evening hours help to relieve the added stress of parents who have day-care/babysitting issues.

- Girl's Scout Program
 - Led by a church lay leader, the troop meets each Saturday morning from September to June. The program has been in operation for more that twenty years.

- Deacon's Annual Health Fair
 - Free health screening and health information for church members and members of the community. This is operated on a voluntary basis by church members who are in the health profession and by neighboring hospitals and health organizations.

- Interdenominational Shoe Box Ministry
 - Care items such as soap, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, mouth wash, lotion, body wash, wipes, grooming necessities, etc., collected from donations by church members and friends and distributed to the homeless and underserved throughout the area.

- "Souper Saturday/Souper Summer" (Ecumenical Outreach & Mission)
 - Soups (in the winter months); sandwiches and salads (in the warmer months) are made from our kitchen to feed the homeless and who poor are invited in off the streets via volunteers physically reaching out to them to come in and be fed the physical food, and to be ministered to with the Word.

- Women's Group:
 - Rummage Sale - Gently used household items are donated by members and friends and are sold at little or no cost to anyone who wishes to make a purchase.

 - Senior Citizens weekly exercise class

- Annual special worship service in June
- Next Level Christian Café
 - Interdenominational praise and worship and fellowship and communing one Friday each month during the months of September to June.
- The *Heavenly Bells* bell choir
 - A newly formed bell choir consisting of adult and youth members. The choir debuted on January 1st 2012 and is still recruiting new members.
- The UPC Men's Group
 - The group was formed with the purpose of offering support and assistance to other committees and groups in the church.

OUR STATE OF AFFAIRS

As evidenced in the above activities and programs, there is much happening at UPC, yet there is so much more to be, and can done. One cannot deny that our prized possession, our greatest asset inarguably is our lay leadership. Our ever provident Father has graced us with some willing, eager and capable individuals with the readiness to serve in whatever capacity they can. However, we do have a relatively large group of retired and semi-retired members who are embracing the thought of full-time retirement

from both work and church. Simultaneously, our young adult/older youth membership has been spiraling downward for some years, and we will need to grow and strengthen this group in order to develop and maintain a viable and vigorous youth ministry.

There is no lack of youth in the immediate community. The question then is why aren't they filling our sanctuary and fellowship hall? The answer is found in the congregational survey and the Percept Group report. They need more enticing activities to attract them. We need, probably not to add more programs, but to build on those we have so we can rebuild this membership group. There are often complaints of the music being drab and unappealing. These comments come mainly from the youth. It is no secret that music is an integral part of the any youth recreation.

MISSION STUDY TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

There seems to be many missions and activities happening at UPC. However, there is still room for improvement and growth. Below are some recommendations to session from the mission study committee:

- Currently, there are only a total of 13 youth members in the UPC congregation. It is the recommendation of the committee that we develop a youth ministry (probably with a separate youth minister working under the leadership of the lead minister) that will attract and retain youth members. This ministry should be vibrant, attractive, music and dance oriented, and use modern communications technology to help minister the word of Christ in an environment conducive to full participation of the youth and their friends and relatives.

- Currently there are 113 active adult members in the congregation. If we increase adult membership through community outreach and evangelism (to include but not exclusive to open-air worships in the parking lot, on Van Houten Street, etc. The more active members we have, the more participation we have. Senior members, elders and deacons are feeling overwhelmed and burnt-out because of the overlap of roles and the continuous burden they bear from the various roles they play in the church.

- We need to be more physically visible in the community. Some residents are of the impression that the church is closed due to the lack of activity on the Broadway side. The door(s), weather permitting, should remain open during Sunday service, with members of the Men's Group volunteering to be posted nearby as guards.

- As evidenced in the congregational survey, the majority of the respondents did not understand the practices and principles of the Presbyterian Church. The committee recommends that each Sunday a small section of the bulletin be dedicated to educating about Presbyterianism. The section could be titled "*Presbyterian 101*", or a more original title with bits of information to educate, inform, and enlighten members and visitors about the history, teachings and principles of the Presbyterian Church. There is a wealth of information that could be obtained on this topic from palpres.org, or other reliable sources.

- Expand the YESS group to include increased teen mentoring and self-esteem building and motivational activities (plans have already been executed for this endeavor).

- Increase camaraderie and team building by reviving the summer week-end retreat at Camp Johnsonburg in New Jersey.

References:

1. Presbytery of the Palisades website - *palpres.org*
2. The Percept group: <http://www.link2lead.com/MyCommunity/10Facts.aspx?Report=S>;
(<http://www.link2lead.com/PDF/download.aspx?temp=true&menu=MyComm&name=PPc.pdf&oid=398372&uid=471691>)
3. UPC Clerk of Session - *Elder Lawrence Stephens III*

Members of the Mission Study Committee:

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