

## Bedford, NY



# Vision Study

## December 2019

# **Our Working Vision**

To be a vibrant, welcoming, inclusive community of God that inspires and motivates each other to live their faith in action.

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# Gratitude from the Vision Study Team

Our eight-month journey has given us the gifts of reflection, dialogue, togetherness and importantly clarity. Clarity on the importance of our shared faith. Clarity on the value we hold for each other. Clarity on the need for inclusive communities such as ours to help make a difference each day in our world. Clarity on the love we have for God and one other.

We thank the congregation for their engagement.

We thank the Session for their support.

We thank Patrick, Billye and the Presbytery for their guidance.

In a world where time is often the most challenging commodity, we feel blessed to have the time to understand and reflect on where we have been, discuss and debate where we are going, and align on our exciting path forward.

Our first and last prayer is always, “Thank you.”

**Thank you.**

The Vision Study Team

Jeanne Collins, Brian Hiller, Wendy Branche, Rick Mast, Marcy Carlson, Alison Cape, Lara DiCorpo, Patrick Vaughn (interim minister), Billye Steinnagel (Presbytery advisor)

# Purpose

The purpose of the Vision Study process and output is to:

- Give the congregation time to reflect on where we have been and where we are going
- Create a working articulation of BPC's Vision for the next 5+ years
- Provide attributes and expectations of the new minister
- Be an actionable framework for decision-making about BPC's forward efforts and focus areas

# Methodology

Overall, at the beginning of the project the Vision Team defined a successful Vision Study process as one that had:

- High level of transparency
- High level of engagement
- High level of communication
- The appropriate time for reflection while maintaining the momentum of the engagement and learning

Our process had three phases:

1. Learning and Engagement (May-September)
  - a. Vision Study Discussion Groups: six, 90-minute conversations (see p. 18)
  - b. Community Conversations: multiple one-on-one conversations with community leaders (see p. 17)
  - c. Online Survey: survey with 140 responses (see, p. 22)
  - d. Demographic Report: report of Bedford area demographics (see p. 8)
2. Vision Creation (October – November)
3. Review and Sharing (December)

The 9-member Vision team met approximately monthly to discuss the progress of the learnings, decide on next steps for engagement and share informal feedback they were receiving from the congregation and community. The team provided regular updates to the congregation on learnings and progress via the weekly BPC e-newsletter, Sunday bulletin and Sunday announcements. An email was set up for anyone to reach out to the team with comments, concerns or feedback.

# Who we are: Our history

## *Plaque on BPC: The cause of Christ and the betterment of Community*

In 1680, 22 men from Stamford obtained a grant to establish a settlement in the township's northwest corner. Following a Native American trail to the head of the Mahanas River, it was known as Hopp Ground because of the many hopp vines growing there. Although they had a grant, these honest men purchased the land from Mohican Indians and on May 16, 1681, the General Court of Hartford gave permission to settle there and name the town, Bedford. Plans were made for a meeting house for town gatherings and religious services, which was erected in 1689. At first, the church was either Congregational or Anglican, depending on the ministry and governing bureaucracy. It is believed that the congregation became Presbyterian under the pastorate of the Rev. William Tennett who came to Bedford in 1720, and who later founded the "Log College" which later became Princeton University. In the early 1700's, the first meeting house was replaced by a new one which was burned by the British in 1779, along with most of the other buildings in the village during the American Revolution. A third church, a very simple structure, was erected in 1783 after the war. As Bedford became more prosperous, John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, retired to Bedford and gave the silver communion ware still displayed on the communion table on most Sunday mornings.

The cornerstone of the present Victorian Gothic Church was laid in 1871, funded by a gift of \$50,000 from Mr. and Mrs. Francis A Palmer. Mr. Palmer was a descendant of one of the first settlers and a lifelong member of the church. One of the Palmer's stipulations in presenting their gift was that the church was to be forever after a free church. This was a policy change as the church had garnered a steady income since 1856 by renting pews to its members. The April 25, 1865 date of the completion of the manse is known, thanks to a diary entry by the Rev. Peter Heroy, stating that he and his family had moved in. The manse has a secret closet behind the bookcase in the den which some believe was used during the Underground Railroad. The Palmer's donation included money for an organ produced by the Odell Organ Company. It was situated to the left of the shell in the front of the sanctuary. In the mid 1950's, it was replaced by a small Skinner pipe organ and in 1963, Bruce Angell, BPC organist and choir director designed and constructed another that was used until the late 1990's. In 1998, the congregation contracted with Martin Pasi to build a new tracker organ for the church. This 2-manual organ of 29 stops, located in the rear choir loft, was dedicated in April 2001.

Over the past 60 years, under the ministerial leadership of Thomas A. Hughart and Paul Alcorn, the Palmer's vision of building a community and furthering the good causes of Christ has been realized in a variety of ways. BPC has been a community center for Bedford Village. It has been the home of two nursery

schools, a private Christian School, and currently, a division of another private school. AA has met in Fellowship Hall for many years, as have the local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. In the 1970's, the stone basement, "The Pit," provided space for local teens to congregate and socialize on Friday evenings. Over the last 15+ years, the church has sponsored service trips to Nicaragua and West Virginia, an opportunity for adults and high school students to reflect on life, faith, values, and the world around them as they construct and repair homes for families in need.

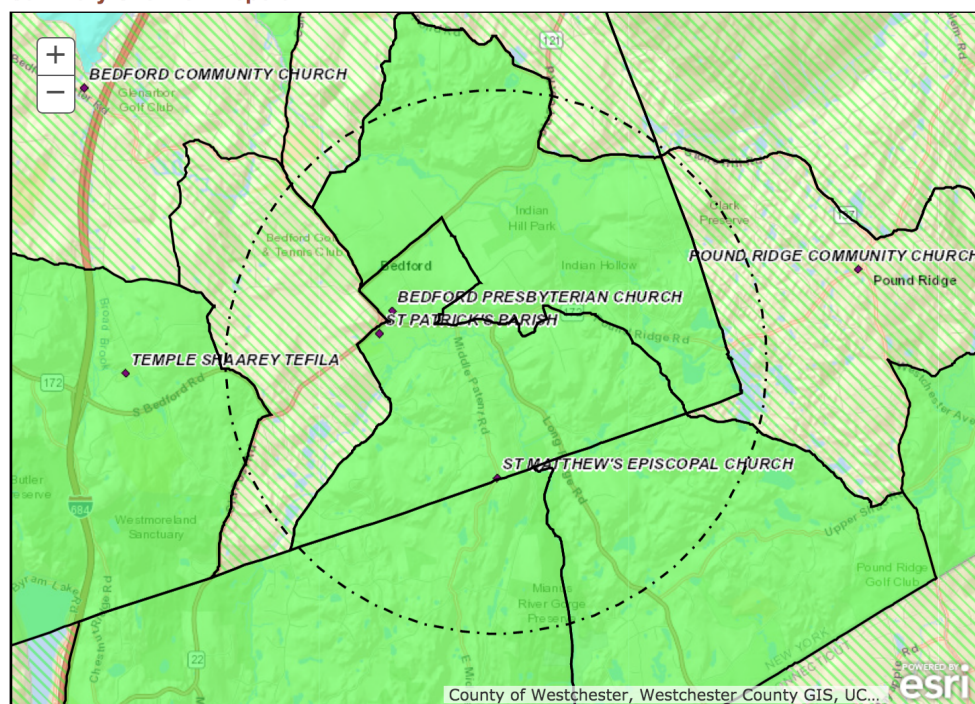
Bedford Presbyterian Church is a forward-looking congregation located in a historic building. The church is well known in the area for its creative worship, its outreach ministries, and the strength of its youth program.

**Overall the history of BPC reflects its commitment to youth education, community engagement and social justice. The proud history of the Church has evolved but remains rooted in inclusivity, reaching out into the community and consistent leadership.**

# Who we are: Our community

BPC's home is Bedford Village, NY, which has a population of about 17,300 people and is the primary source of membership. Survey data indicated that "location/close to home" was the #1 reason that initially brought people to BPC. Neighboring towns of Pound Ridge (5,200 people) and Bedford Hills (3,000 people) also are important towns for membership. The close surrounding area has several other religious communities per the map below.

## Summary Overview Report

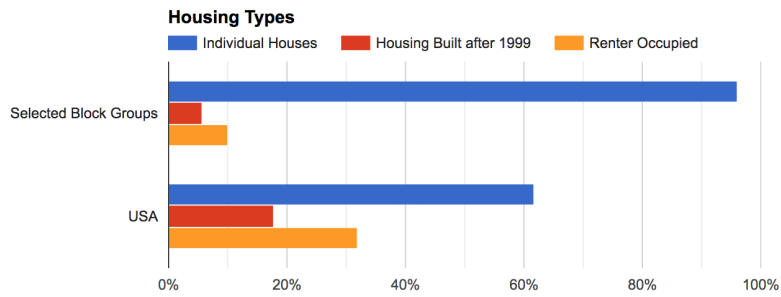


## Congregations in this area

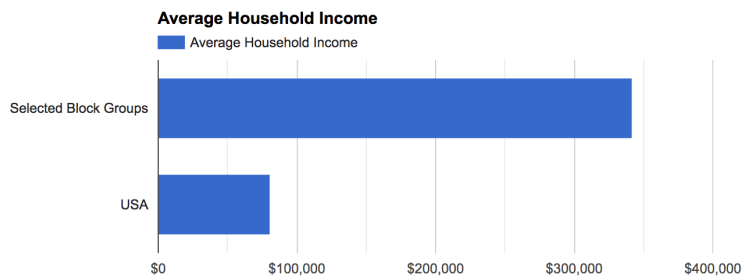
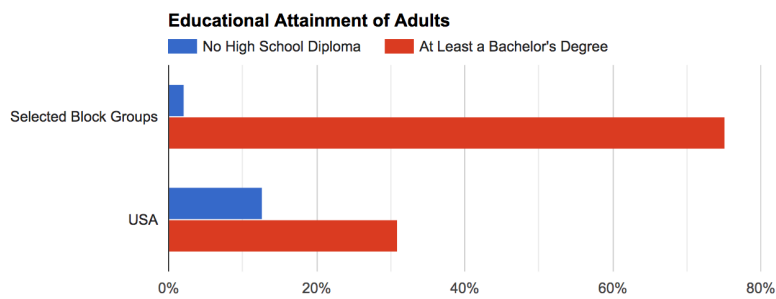
Name	Denomination
Bedford Presbyterian Church	<a href="#">Presbyterian Church (USA)</a>
Pound Ridge Community Church	<a href="#">United Methodist Church</a>
St Matthew's Episcopal Church	<a href="#">Episcopal Church</a>
St Patrick Parish	<a href="#">Roman Catholic Church</a>
St Patrick's Parish	<a href="#">Roman Catholic Church</a>
Temple Shaarey Tefila	
Unitarian Universalist Filwshp	<a href="#">Unitarian Universalist Association</a>



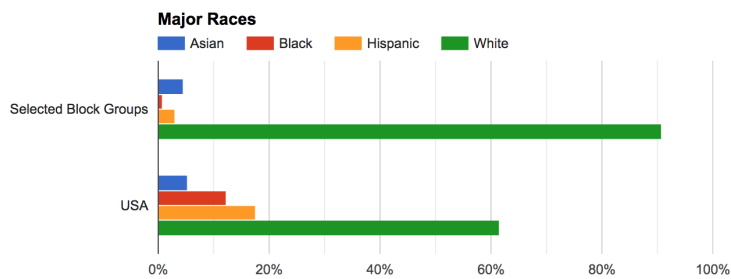
Other related demographic information of the Bedford Village community relative to rest of US are listed below.



[Click here for more details on housing.](#)



[Click here for more details on latest income and occupations data.](#)



[Click here for more details on race, language, and foreign born.](#)

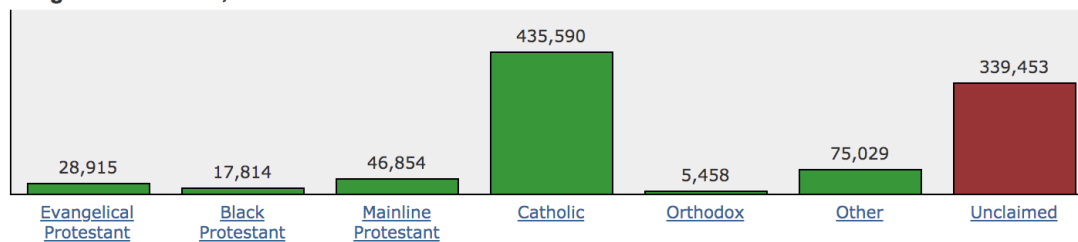
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - ACS 2017 5-year estimates

Marital Status (People 15 and over)	2012	2015	% Change
--Single/never married	1,577 (18.7%)	1,801 (20.5%)	+14.2%
--Married	6,077 (72.2%)	5,931 (67.5%)	-2.4%
--Separated	111 (1.3%)	68 (0.8%)	-38.7%
--Spouse absent (not separated)	76 (0.9%)	100 (1.1%)	+31.6%
--Divorced	376 (4.5%)	533 (6.1%)	+41.8%
--Widowed	202 (2.4%)	357 (4.1%)	+76.7%

Household/Family Type	2015
----Family household, married couple	2,943 (73.4%)
----Family household, male householder, no wife present	114 (2.8%)
----Family household, female householder, no husband present	246 (6.1%)
----Non-family household, living alone	634 (15.8%)
----Non-family household, not living alone	73 (1.8%)

## Westchester County (New York)

### Religious Traditions, 2010



# Who we are: members, staff, finances

## Membership

The Bedford Presbyterian Church currently has more than 360 active members who call our church home. These members are from both families rooted in the Bedford Presbyterian Church tradition as well as newcomers to the area. While members hail from 35 different towns, the towns best represented are Bedford (36%), Katonah (15%), Pound Ridge (9%), and Armonk (5%). In addition to the active members, the Church is fortunate to count among its ranks nearly 80 “Friends of Bedford Presbyterian Church”. Each member or friend adds to the vibrancy of the Church community.

## Staff

Bedford Presbyterian Church has been blessed with a strong staff who provides spiritual leadership and enable church operations. The staff includes Rev. Dr. Partick Vaughn, Interim Pastor, Rev. Heather Brown-Huston, Minister of Congregational Life, John Lettieri, Director of Music, Elyssa Michaels, Director of High School and Middle School Youth Groups, Osvaldo Rojas, Custodian and Jessica De Alto, Office Manager. Their dedication to BPC is critical to the fulfillment of the many aspects of the church mission.

## Financials

Historically, the congregation at Bedford Presbyterian Church is extraordinarily generous and as a Church has been able to take advantage of the generosity to incubate and foster many important initiatives as part of the mission. For example, the Church, under the former pastor, was the founding member of the Emergency Shelter, the Westchester Youth Alliance, and the Rewarding Potential Scholars. The first two listed have been or are in the process of being established as separate entities from the Church. These initiatives have been supported and continue to be supported by many members of the congregation.

However, over the last 3-5 years, there has been a noticeable drop in both the number of pledges and overall pledge income. In 2016, there were 125 pledges resulting in \$500,000 pledge income while in 2019, we have 92 pledges with \$360,000 of pledged income, a decrease of approximately 28%. As a result, our operating budget has been in a difficult position given that many of the Church’s expenses are fixed or not easily reduced. Specifically, our 147 year-old structure requires rigorous maintenance and improvement of the mechanical functions as well as personnel costs that take time to appropriately adjust. Given the financial pressure facing our church, the concern is that there will be missed opportunities to be the change we want to see in the world.

# What we do

## Worship

Our worship services use traditional liturgy with a progressive theology. There is a strong focus on preaching and the music program is highly valued (see below). Communion is held six times per year.

Two years ago, two large portable screens were introduced into worship, and have been used for the majority of services since. These are used to display the liturgy, hymn lyrics and occasionally videos of church activities or worship illustrations. Hymnals are still used and available, including large print versions. A new sound system was recently installed, and is in the process of being upgraded to better accommodate those with limited hearing.

Children typically stay in the service for the beginning of worship. There is a time with the children, at which point elementary age children leave for Sunday Spirit, while middle and high school age youth are encouraged to stay in the service. Pre-school children are provided child care throughout the service, to be used as desired by the parents.

**Input from the Vision conversations and survey indicates that there is some tension with the structure and style of worship.** Is it progressive or is it traditional? While the layout of the service is fairly “traditional,” the theology has a more progressive POV.

Principles that seem to be shared as important for the worship service:

- **Enabling moments of sharing, supporting and connecting** - A key moment in the worship is the joys and concerns and this reflects the desire to share and support each other.
- **Allowing for learning and reflection** and being challenged. Respondents in the survey and the vision discussions indicated that they enjoyed when the sermons and worship service “made me think” and importantly when they felt inspired to go apply what they learned in their daily lives.
- **Sharing a spirit of generosity, giving and participation** as reflected in a desire to be involved in the worship as well as opinions about giving including the children’s offering. There seems to be a desire given increasingly busy schedules for there to be alternative ways to engage even if one cannot be there on Sunday (e.g., ability to stream the service; ability to download sermons, other times to engage, etc.)

- **Balancing traditional and newer approaches to worship.** While there are mixed opinions, it seems that striking a balance of more traditional and “newer” styles are what most people are seeking.

## Missions

Helping those in need and following Jesus teachings that we love one another guides the work of the Mission Committee. Indeed, many members of the congregation feel that community outreach is one of the most important things we do at Bedford Presbyterian Church. While we support causes abroad, most of our effort addresses the needs in our area, allocating funds, organizing focused appeals and providing hands-on support.

Below are the organizations and activities we currently support both with funds and/or volunteers:

**A-Home**, dedicated to providing affordable housing to those in need,  
**The Community Center**, providing food, clothing, household items and employment counseling,  
**CROP Walk**, addressing the problems of hunger and emergency relief around the world,  
**Christmas Gift Giving/Dove Tree**, providing an opportunity to extend our Christmas gift giving to include the larger circle of our community,  
**Emergency Shelter Partnership**, a coalition of more than 20 congregations working together to provide emergency shelter during the coldest months of the year. BPC was the first congregation to host the shelter.  
**Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry**, providing groceries to needy people in the community,  
**Midnight Run**, providing opportunities throughout the year for youth and adults to interact with and deliver donated food, clothing, blankets and toiletries to homeless people in Manhattan.  
**Neighbor's Link**, meeting the needs of over 4000 Latino immigrants, who represent over 26% of Mount Kisco's total population,  
**Holmes Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center**, the outdoor Christian education and retreat facility of the Presbyteries of Hudson River, Long Island and New York City,  
**Work Trips**, providing opportunities twice a year for adults and high school students to reflect about life, faith, values and the world in which they live as they construct homes for families in need.  
**Rewarding Potential Scholarship**, providing gap money between what a family can afford and what college/university financial aid packages offer.  
**Laundry Love**, a national program helping families in need of access to laundry supplies and a laundromat in which wash and dry their clothes,  
**Open Door**, a local walk-in medical facility that provides free medical services to adults and children living at or below the poverty level.  
**My Sister's Place and Hope's Door**, striving to end domestic violence and human trafficking through comprehensive services, advocacy and community

education.

**Christa Kuusisto Honorary Scholarship**, awarded each year to a graduating Fox Lane High School student whose commitment to community service is exemplary,

**Bridges to Community**, helping families and communities in impoverished areas of the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua build a better life for themselves and a brighter future for their children,

**Women to Women Prison Ministry**, connecting women in our congregation and community with women incarcerated at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility to provide much-needed emotional support, encouragement and friendship.

### **Input from the Vision conversations and survey indicates the following about the mission activities**

- People appreciate the **great breadth and diversity of activations**
- It is **often overwhelming/challenging for new members to know how to get involved** given the number and diversity of activities as well as the different “contact” people for each activity.
- Given increasingly busy schedules and reduced full-time staff there is a concern about **how will BPC resource all of these activities?** There is a recognition for the need to be more focused to ensure that we do the most important missions really well.
- There is a **hope that we will take a fresh look at all of our activities** and priorities and create alignment under our new vision.

## **Music**

Many parishioners will say that music is an integral part of a church service and can be a source of spiritual inspiration. The congregation of Bedford Presbyterian Church is no exception. Music thrives at BPC. Our organ is a magnificent instrument and is considered one of the finest of its kind in Westchester County. Our choir, under the direction of John Lettieri, works very hard throughout the year with rehearsals during the week and on Sundays before worship. They sing quite a bit during each service. On a typical Sunday they sing an Introit (the opening of the liturgical celebration), two or three anthems, a Benediction response as well as leading the congregation in hymns. Twice a year the choir performs a special extended music program during worship.

Our Christmas and Easter services are particularly glorious and feature the adult and children’s choirs, directed by John Lettieri and Kathy Perry, and include professional instrumental and vocal soloists. During a service in Advent, an instrumental ensemble made up of musicians from our church families performs.

The Bedford Bellringers, under the direction of Heidi Michaels, perform twice a year during worship. Hope Black and Marcy Carlson deserve a lot of credit for keeping this program going.

Bedford Presbyterian Church also opens its doors to professional instrumental ensembles for concerts open to the public.

**Input from the Vision conversations and survey indicates that:**

- Music serves a different role for different people - for some, Music is an important form of participation. For others, music is a time of reflection

## Christian Education and Youth Programming

One of the key reasons that people initially decide to come to BPC is a desire for their children to have exposure to Christian education. The BPC Christian Education program has three foundational components:

### **1) Sunday Spirit**

A weekly program run by volunteer parents for children in K-8<sup>th</sup> grade during the worship service on Sundays. Sunday Spirit seeks to always have a welcoming and fun environment with the goal of having kids “want” to come each week. Lessons are focused on a combination of the teachings of Jesus and how these learnings give us regular examples of living our faith each day.

### **Bible Study**

In third grade, there is an 8-week class dedicated to the basics of the Bible. Key learning areas include Bible structure, Old and New Testament and select readings. Kids have time to discuss and ask questions. On the Sunday of the last class, they receive a Bible from the congregation (which the congregation has an opportunity to sign.)

**Input from the Vision conversations and survey indicates that**

- Families with kids/desire for youth education and involvement in a church is often what brings people to BPC. **This is a key moment to attract new members.**
- There are mixed feelings about the state of Sunday spirit and the level and type of teaching that should happen. **Again the theme of the need for balance emerged.**
- Again with the vision in place there is **a desire to reflect on creating programs specifically for K-4 kids and families that align with our focus.** Ideas include:
  - monthly activity to encourage young kids and their friends to come to BPC

- have a weekly “walkers club”/youth group for 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> graders to walk to the Church one day a week and have activities at the Church
- develop creative ways outside of Sunday to engage children

## **2) Middle School Youth Group**

A biweekly program (now run by a part-time staff member Elyssa Michaels) that draws about 30-50 kids not just from BPC but from all communities. The goal of MSYG is to give kids a regular opportunity to socialize, serve and learn what it means to live as people of faith. One meeting a month is more service oriented including preparing breakfast bags for ESP and shopping for the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility Children’s Center.

## **3) High School Youth Group**

The High School group is focused on service-focused work. The goal is to enrich the lives of high school youth with tangible experiences of faith in action. Highlights of the High School program include service trips to Nicaragua and West Virginia. Ninth graders have the opportunity to participate in a confirmation class. The class includes speakers as well as thought-provoking discussions about “what is faith?” and “what does God look like?”

**Input from the Vision conversations and survey indicates that while this is a really strong program, it is not a program that brings new families to BPC but rather is a way to retain existing families/maintain BPC’s leadership role in the community.**

## Welcoming guests

One of the most common words from the survey and conversations to describe BPC is “welcoming.” Almost unanimously people share that the welcoming and inclusive spirit of BPC touched them on their first visit to the Church AND is often what keeps them coming. In the past, welcoming guests was largely handled by the minister Rachel Thompson who followed up with calls and visits and helped visitors find ways to get involved that touched their specific interests and talents. Since Rachel’s retirement, reaching out to new visitors has been informal.

**Input from the Vision conversations and survey indicates that we can do a better job of ensuring that we are always welcoming to new guests and that we are more disciplined about following up with visitors.**



# What we learned

## Community Conversation Learnings

Conversations were formally held with the leaders of several community organizations with a strong history of collaboration with Bedford Presbyterian Church. This included the President of the Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry, the Director of the Community Center of Northern Westchester, Rabbi Jason Navarez of Temple Sharay Tefila and Rev. Kym McNair of the Antioch Baptist Church. Less formal discussions were had with members of local churches and organizations, and also with community members not affiliated with any religious organization.

Although conversations took many different forms, the conversations were directed to address the following themes:

- *What is the perception of BPC? Where/who/how did that develop? Has it changed over time?*
- *What do they see as the “role” of BPC in the community? Is BPC fulfilling that? How?*
- *Are there “wishes” of what BPC could do in the community? What 3-4 words best describe BPC to them? Why?*

### **The general findings from these conversations are as follows:**

- BPC is seen by everyone as an active participant in the community
- A sense that when there is a need in the community, **BPC has “always been there.”** When there is an important social justice event, BPC participates.
- The identity of the church is still very wrapped up in it being “Paul’s church.”
- Although the financial and volunteer representation is acknowledged there is still a feeling that most of the relationship building came from Paul and thus there is now a void of “relationship” even if the commitment has remained.
- There was a feeling that there are “pet projects” or “favored relationships” (MKIFP/Neighbors Link over Community Center and Temple Sharay Tefila over Antioch for example). *Is this congregation based or was it simply based on Paul’s strongest connections?*
- There was a feeling of wanting to increase relationship with people perhaps with the exception of Temple Sharay Tefil and MK IFP who clearly expressed strong relationships currently.

## Other informal community member conversations

Key themes from long-time members:

- **Kids!** Kids consistently came up as the key reason that people started to attend BPC.
- **Balance existed** when the staff included Paul and Rachel and there was a sense that this balance started to tilt after Rachel's retirement.
- **Try new things** - There was a steady energy and desire to start NEW programs as well as the passion and time to take it on.
- **Inclusion defined** - There was a clear belief that Christian values were always the foundation of the work of BPC while there was a very clear acknowledgement and openness that there are other ways to see the world/faith.
- **The heart of the community** - There was an understanding that BPC was always in the "heart" of Bedford and was highly connected to social activities and "tough" social topics that came up. BPC was always there for the big moments (9/11; Sandy Hook; etc.) as well as the daily moments when people needed an anchor.

## Congregational Conversation Learnings

The vision study team engaged the BPC community through a series of focus group discussions as well as one-on-one conversations. Between late May and early July, 2019 **approximately 40 – 50 people from the congregation attended a focus group or approached a vision study team member directly to share their views.** The congregation was asked about their views of the church today and in the future. In addition to providing some important input to the vision and mission of the church, participants also said they benefited from meeting and hearing the perspective of other members. While some definite themes did emerge, there was also great diversity of thought.

Some common themes included:

- Members were attracted to the church for different reasons, but most frequently cited was **the beauty of the building, the location, the people, the pastor and the music.**
- Our congregation includes some critical thinkers who enjoy and expect to be challenged in their thinking. **They like to think and be challenged in their thinking, but do not like to be told what to do.**
- One of the areas of real diversity of thought is in the balance of the sermons/messages - some would prefer more reference to scripture and the bible and less political leanings, and some prefer less scripture and the bible and more spiritual, social or political leanings. However, **where there is commonality is that many like the modern day application of messages,**

**including the key messages of inclusivity, regardless of where the message begins.**

- Many **are seeking community and that can be represented in many different ways. Many do want to seek more connections** and the need to be here for each other was called out often as important. Many are also seeking **spiritual guidance** and ways to continue their faith. Similar to above, how they want to explore and continue on their journey of faith can be different across the congregation.
- While the congregation might not be diverse in its ethnic make-up, it does pride itself on the **inclusivity it values and demonstrates through its activities.**
- Almost all recognize the **need for more members** and in particular many call out the need for more families and younger children to bring more vitality to the church.
- The congregation was asked for their ideas on what BPC should **START doing, STOP doing and CONTINUE to do in order to create more vitality in our church for the next 3 – 5 years.** Not surprisingly, there was a diversity of views, including some ‘starts’ that were other peoples’ “stops.” The vision is intended to help ground these ideas and be the foundation for decision-making on these ideas and others going forward. Below is a summary of the themes.

<b>Start</b>	<p>Sermons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Those which challenge and educate, provide humor</li> <li>-Tape and print on the internet</li> <li>-Nametags</li> <li>-Active pledge giving</li> </ul> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Some cited that music is wonderful and would like to start adding some livelier music that might be interesting for younger people</li> <li>-Yoga, meditation, spirituality group</li> <li>-Parenting group at night</li> <li>-More substantial (faith based) discussion groups</li> <li>-Host social justice programs / events at church to bring more people</li> <li>-Enhance youth program</li> <li>-Connections group that Marcia / Lila used to run</li> </ul> <p>Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Most cited was to start bringing in new members and families</li> <li>-Many cited to get more members involved (a lot of the same people involved)</li> <li>-All church event for fundraising or community building</li> </ul> <p>Sound system (DONE!)</p> <p>Communication with members that supplement the internet and more personal connection / phone calls vs. email</p>
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<b>Stop</b>	<p>Sermons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Political persuasion</li> <li>-Less 'God' and religion &amp; more social justice</li> <li>-Some cited to stop sharing the peace, greeting each other</li> <li>-Long sermons</li> <li>-Minister sitting in audience</li> <li>-Changing order of service</li> <li>-Children's offering or others want the offering but not separate and others want the offering but not together (very mixed on this)</li> <li>-Some want less songs/singing</li> </ul> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Some suggested to prioritize programs</li> <li>-When scheduling be sensitive to parents (e.g., old friends/new friends requires a babysitter; parents group meets during the day so doesn't work for working parents)</li> <li>-Some cited to keep Mistletoe Mart and one suggested to stop it</li> </ul>
<b>Continue</b>	<p>Sermons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Real life examples</li> <li>-Like prior order of service</li> <li>-Strong sermons for social participation</li> <li>-Announcements in beginning of service vs. middle</li> </ul> <p>Values &amp; Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many cited our approach to welcome all people, acceptance of all people, and inclusivity</li> <li>-Interfaith and inter-relational opportunities</li> <li>-Community outreach and support</li> </ul> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many emphasized strong music program</li> <li>-Nursery and kids programs / youth group</li> <li>-Many listed the programs we have in place as items to continue</li> </ul>

## Survey

### **Survey Participation:**

- Online and paper survey available from 9.5.2019 – 10.1.2019. Survey sent to:
  - 300 email database of BPC
  - 180 parent and youth group email list (some overlap)
- 140 participated in total
  - 123 online; 17 paper
  - 65% members
  - 70% female/30% male
  - 47% live in Bedford; 28% in another Westchester town; 18% in Bedford Hills/Pound Ridge/Mount Kisco
  - Range of ages and family status
    - 41% couple with children at home; among those 62% are middle school/high school age and 17% were pre-K/elementary school age
    - 33% couples with no kids at home
    - 83% married
- Response rate of 29% (given overlap of lists could be a slightly higher %)
- All surveys were anonymous

### **Learnings:**

#### ***Current: What originally brought you to BPC and what keeps you coming?:***

	what <b>originally</b> attracted you	what <b>keeps</b> you
<u>Answer choices</u>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Location (close to home)	<b>1</b>	
Youth education programs (pre-Middle School)		
Middle School and High School programs	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
The music program		<b>4</b>

Community and outreach programs (in the local community)	3	3
Charitable programs (outside of the local community)		
Preaching	3	
The building		
<b>The people</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Worship style		
<b>The feeling of community</b>	3	<b>1</b>
Spiritual and continuing education programming		
Inclusivity		

**Current: What does BPC stand for?/How would you describe it to a friend?:**

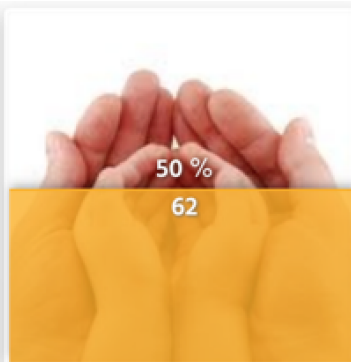




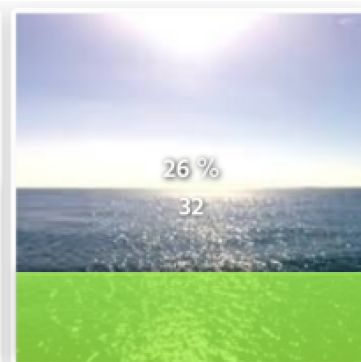
**Current: Which image best describes how BPC makes you feel?:**



Great youth programs with a service focus



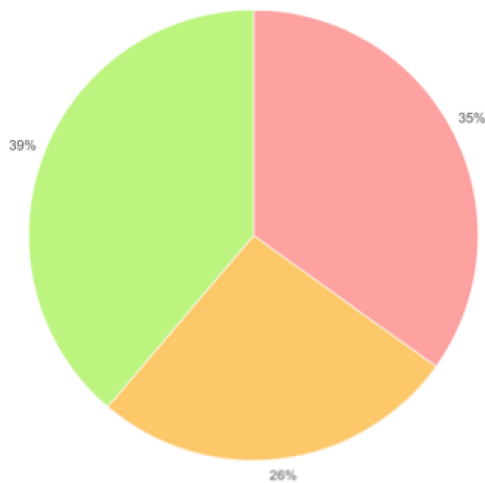
Reflects how I want to feel – warm, nurtured



A place where I can find peace in the world where there is currently very little



**Current: What is BPC's primary role to its congregation?**



**39% - Fostering a sense of community within the congregation**

**35% - Providing Spiritual Guidance**

**26% - Inspiring social actions in the world**

**Current: Comparing areas that are most IMPORTANT to respondents vs. areas where BPC is MOST effective:**

	Importance*	Effective*	Difference
Youth education	4.18	4.05	-0.13
Mission work	4.17	4.54	+0.37
Community engagement	4.14	4.02	-0.12
Spiritual guidance and inspiration	3.83	3.45	-0.38
Worship service	3.67	3.48	-0.19

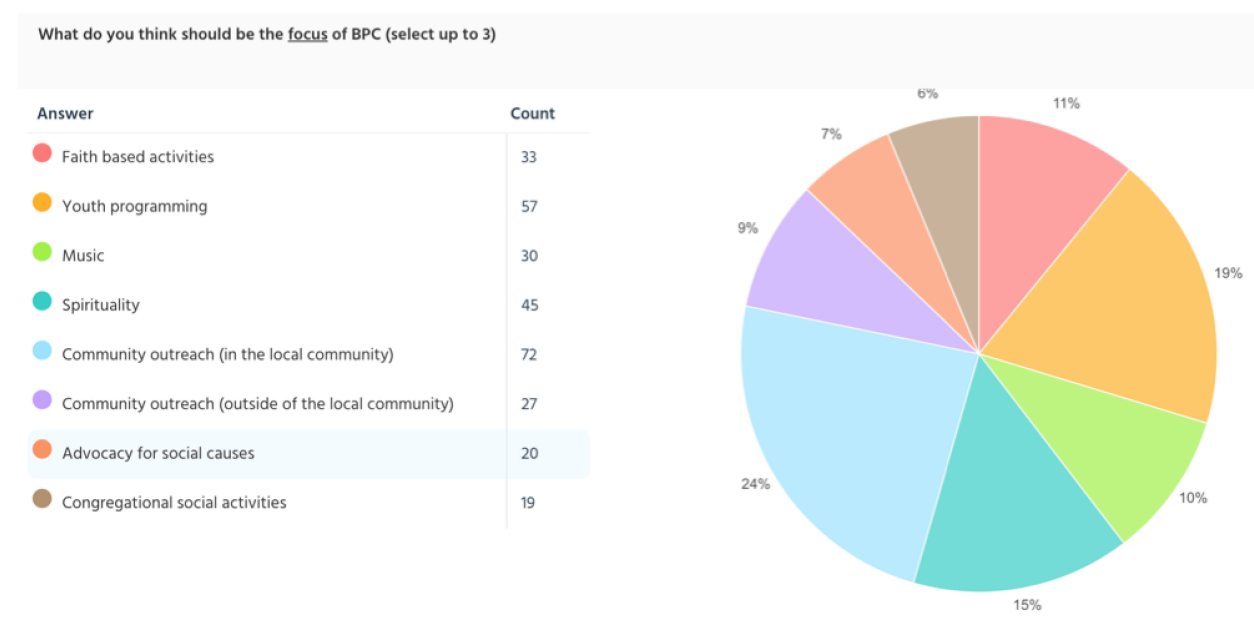
*\*weighted average score based on importance and effective scale question*

*(Note: Negative differences are opportunity areas - these are areas that are important to people but that we are less effective at.)*

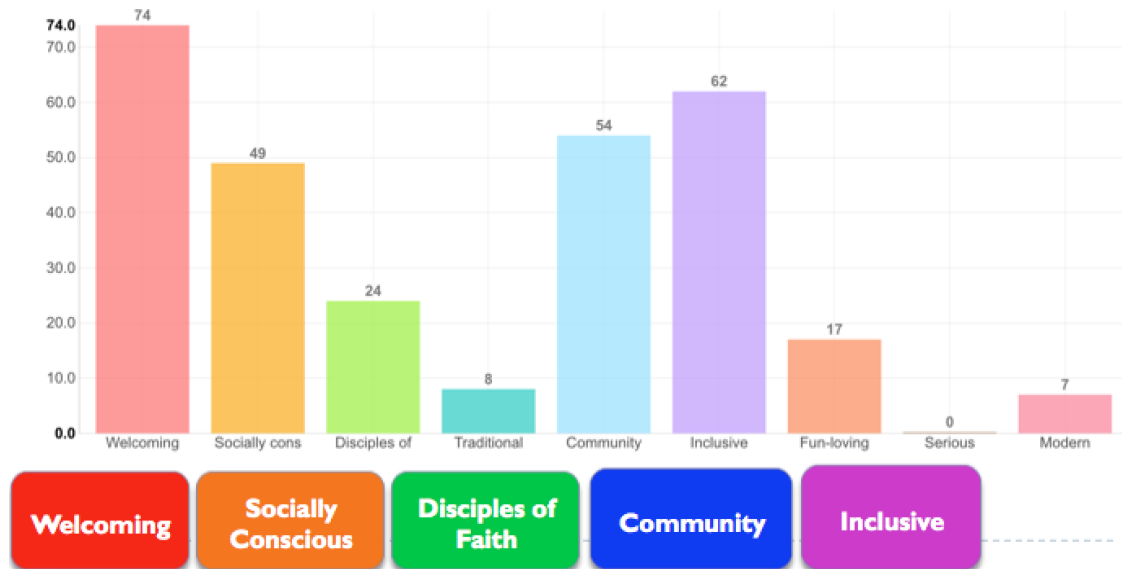
### Current and Future: What description best describes BPC?:

<u>Answer choices</u> (5= best fit BPC)	Score of "5"	Rank of "5"
<b>BPC is a place for all people at all moments - come as you are</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1</b>
BPC is place where we breathe in spiritual guidance and breathe out in our charitable actions	37	
BPC is not just for Sundays, its daily faith in action	36	
BPC is inclusive, welcoming and ready for action	57	3
BPC is a community of faith that seeks to be an example of faith in all we do	53	4
BPC is a place where we ask questions, learn, grow and support each other and our broader community	50	5
BPC is a place where we discover, share and celebrate God	43	
<b>BPC is an inclusive, progressive and welcoming congregation seeking to build community inside and outside of our walls</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2</b>

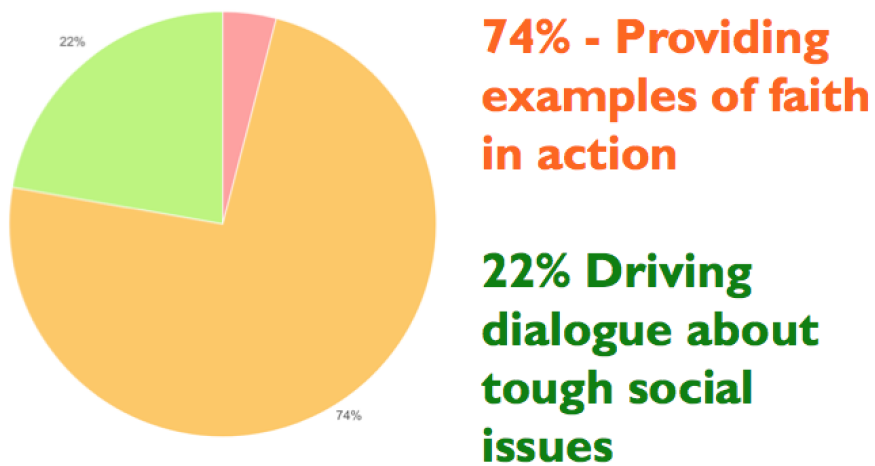
### Future: What should be the focus of BPC?:



***Future: What words best describe what you want BPC to be in the future?:***



***Future: What do you see as BPC's primary role to the community?***



***Future: Attributes for the next minister:***

	<b><u>"1"</u></b>	<b><u>"2"</u></b>	<b><u>"3"</u></b>	<b><u>"4"</u></b>	<b><u>sorted by "5"</u></b> <b><u>scores</u></b>	<b><u>weighted</u></b> <b><u>score</u></b>
<b>Compassionate</b>	0	0	7	21	77	<b>4.67</b>
<b>Motivating</b>	0	1	6	20	74	<b>4.63</b>
<b>Collaborative</b>	0	3	9	22	67	<b>4.46</b>
<b>Energetic</b>	2	2	12	26	63	<b>4.33</b>
Hopeful	1	4	15	28	55	<b>4.19</b>
Flexible	1	3	14	32	50	<b>4.20</b>
Progressive	4	7	16	25	49	<b>3.89</b>
Spiritual Visionary	4	7	23	25	41	<b>3.74</b>
Intellectual	0	6	24	33	37	<b>3.89</b>



# Summary and Potential Actions

## Our Joys

- One other
- A place and a feeling that enables a moment to take a breath
- Seeing our faith in action
- Our kids
- BPC's welcoming spirit

## Our Concerns

- **Optimizing and improving the CE programs.** Christian education is often what brings people to BPC yet there are several challenges currently facing us.
  - The Director of Christian Education Ministry recently resigned leaving a gap in this important role and the need for parent volunteers to fully run the Sunday Spirit program. Recent trends and the Bedford area has a high number of working parents leaving less volunteer hours available.
- **Creating a vibrancy and energy YEAR round versus at select moments**
- **Resolving the challenge of - are we a faith community or a Presbyterian church?**
- **Addressing our financials** - this is a common concern across the congregation
- **Finding the right Balance** – how do we find the right balance of reflection and action? Of internal nurturing and external nurturing? Of faith vs. work? Of traditional vs. “new” worship styles? Of traditional vs. “new” youth education?
- **Helping to address the “big” job for all faith communities of redefining “Church” and “Christianity” for today’s world.**
- **Addressing the need to move to more digital communication** and implementing these digital tools creatively and in an engaging way. (e.g., website content; podcasts; streaming).

## What ties us together

- **Living our faith in action**
  - 74% agree that providing examples of faith in action is BPC's primary role in the community
  - Whether it be the themes for Sunday Spirit, the diversity of the MSYG or the passion with which members talk about our mission work, there is no controversy that BPC members seek to live their faith in action
  - **A strong and stated belief that what I DO is connected to what I BELIEVE**
- **Being action oriented** - BPC members want to get to work. They seek to build/create/do - from Christmas decorating to participating in youth work trips to helping with worship, members are often happiest when they are in action.
- **Believing in inclusion** – there is a belief in Christian values and following the way of Jesus but there is an unconditional openness to all beliefs.
- **Knowing we can make an impact** – a belief that BPC has been and will continue to be the heart of the Bedford community. This means we are available to the community, that we reflect our openness in our words and actions and that we face tough issues head on but with an open heart. We believe we can make an impact in big and little ways one person at a time.
- **Enjoying simply being together** - we enjoy being able to share in each other's moments of joys and, of equal importance, to be there to support one another when needed.
- **Finding ways for our kids to explore their faith** in a supportive, safe and open-minded environment.
- **Continuing to learn, grow, be challenged and be inspired** to be good, do good and have a positive impact on the world

## Potential Actions

- **Review mission activities** through the lens of the vision and seek to prioritize to enable the right funding and time against each.
  - Find creative ways to engage the unique talents of the members to drive and improve these programs as well as develop NEW programs based on the needs and interests of the community.
  - Create communication geared to new members /visitors to allow them to easily know how to participate.

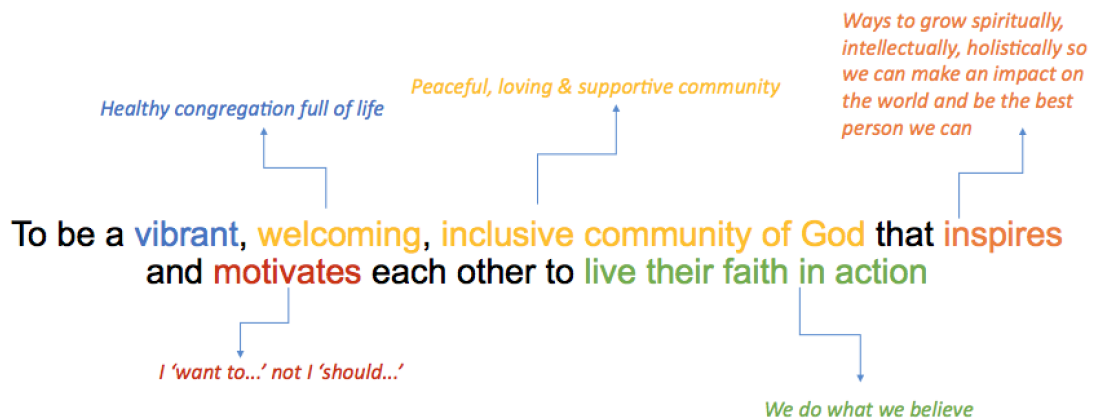
- **Re-invigorate the Christian Education program.** Seriously consider the need for paid staff versus volunteers to creatively drive these programs forward.
- **Conduct additional research and explore ways to increase the number of new visitors to BPC.** Enable on-going marketing efforts with the goal of increasing membership.
- **Consider additional ways to bring people together outside of traditional Sunday worship.**

### **Qualities of a new minister → a Leader who:**

- Inspires us to action
- Guides us to learn, ask questions, make a difference
- Brings us together
- Is creative to help us think and act differently
- Is an empathetic listener
- Is bold and fearless to face the “tough questions”



# Our Working Vision Moving Forward



Working Vision:

To be a vibrant, welcoming, inclusive community of God that inspires and motivates each other to live their faith in action

How:

**Our Mission Work**

Our mission includes a range of programs geared to living our faith in action within our local community and our global world. This mission work seeks to make a difference on people's lives one at a time.

How:

**Our CE program**

Our CE program provides a warm, welcoming, safe space for our youth to explore and grow in their faith. We encourage questions, dialogue and openness.

How:

**Our Faith Family**

At BPC we enjoy each other. On a regular basis we seek ways to support each other and to explore our faith together. We laugh and cry together all with the love of God around us.

## **Our prayerful recommendations and hopes:**

- ♥ We find a united way to have one foot in the past and one foot in the future
- ♥ We find the energy, time and resources to activate what we believe with what we do
- ♥ We have the courage to help lead the redefinition of Church and Faith for today's world
- ♥ We create regular moments to enjoy each other, to nurture each other and to feel the peace of God's love