
Milford Presbyterian Church
Milford, Michigan
Feasibility Review

Submitted by
Rev. John Laster
February 25, 2018



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Milford Presbyterian Church – Milford, Michigan

Horizons Stewardship Company was asked to conduct a Feasibility-Readiness Study for Milford Presbyterian to test the congregation's readiness for a capital campaign later in 2018. The campaign would be to secure funds for addressing facility repairs and upgrades. Your leaders describe the proposed campaign project as follows:

Our plan for the facilities of Milford Presbyterian Church is oriented toward creating an open, welcoming environment for all who enter. Our front entrance will be made accessible to those with mobility challenges and the main lobby will be modernized to create a clean and bright first impression for visitors. The lower level will be opened up, transforming narrow hallways into a broad space where fellowship and conversation can happen more naturally. A new floor covering and other aesthetic improvements to Fellowship Hall will round out the transformation of the main level.

A new, full-size elevator will carry people to and from the second level for worship, Sunday school, rehearsals, meetings, and other activities. The pews at the top of the stairs will be returned to the balcony and replaced by flexible seating which can be removed when not needed in order to create a more open area at the top of the main stairs that will promote fellowship before and after worship. Clear, bright display monitors will replace the projector screen in the sanctuary so that all four of our beautiful rose windows will be visible to worshipers, and cracks in the plaster will be repaired.

*Behind the scenes, new boilers and upgrades to lighting and windows will improve our building's efficiency many times over. New access controls will ensure the security of our facilities while also enabling the church on the corner to maintain its important role as a gathering place for a variety of groups in our community. A new flat roof will keep our ceilings pristine for decades to come. **Total project cost will fall somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million, depending on funds raised and project scope.***

Taken together, these projects will further our goal of being a place of welcome for all who enter, they will deepen the ties of community within our congregation, and they will position us to be a more effective witness in Milford and beyond to the good news of God's kingdom.

Note:

- Total projected cost range is \$500,000—\$1,000,000.
- The project list is early in its development and contains both specific quotes, and estimates.
- This \$500,000—\$1,000,000 project list is 1.37x—2.75x your level of giving toward the ministry operations (\$363,592) in 2016

The Feasibility Study was conducted by:

1. Conducting oral interviews with 45 active and engaged persons within the congregation representing 29 households.
2. The remainder of the congregation was then invited to share their confidential responses to the same questions we covered in the personal interviews.
 - 4 Households responded through the online survey, 2 responded by email, and 36 households responded by mail.
 - We interacted with a total of 71 households.
3. Reviewing data supplied by the church.

Data Reflections

Milford Presbyterian Church is comprised of 469 members, plus constituents.

—Worship and Membership

- Worship Trends (Annual Average Worship Attendance):

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
195	194	192	171	169

 - Average Worship Attendance has slipped 13.3% in the five years since 2013
- Membership Trends:

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
496	506	516	472	469

 - For 2017, 36% of your members are reflected in your Average Worship Attendance.
 - ✓ Ideally, a vibrant healthy congregation will have more people in worship than they carry in Membership. Membership means something. Decide clearly what it means at Milford Presbyterian Church.
- The church records 341 Member Households

— Finance and Stewardship

- The Annual Budget this fiscal year (April 2017—March 2018) is \$310,000.

- Pledges
 - 110 Households pledged their tithes and offerings to financially support the mission and ministry of the congregation in 2017.
 - Based on donations in 2016 of \$363,592, the average member that year gave \$770.32 a year to the operations of the church. This is significantly below (27.6%) the PCUSA Average Giving per Member of \$1,060.88 for 2016. Looking at AWA, the “average attender” at Milford Presbyterian gave \$2,126.26 annually in 2016; compared to the Average Giving per Worshipper in the PCUSA that year of \$2,549.20.
- Debt
 - The congregation is carrying no debt.
- Endowment
 - The congregation has not opened an endowment to help provide long-term financial stability.

Factors Influencing Success:

In evaluating the data, interviews, and survey results there are at least three factors that will influence success of the proposed campaign:

- A. Engagement: With only 36% of your members reflected in your Average Worship Attendance, the reality is that a portion of the congregation are carrying the load for the entire 469 members. Stewardship is a Leading Spiritual Indicator. Giving tends to follow, rather than precede, personal participation in the ministry life of the church, as your annual giving averages reflect. Every member and constituent needs a place to belong and be cared for, and a place to live out their gifts and calling in ministry to the world around us. The current Small Group, Caring, Leadership Development, and Mobilizing / Ministry systems infrastructure is likely inadequate for 469 people. Much less any desired new people. Adequate infrastructure is crucial to support desired levels of engagement.
- B. Clarify ministry direction and generate momentum. Milford Presbyterian Church urgently needs much stronger communication of your vision for your ministry and mission in the village of Milford and beyond. Articulate a clear vision for the next 3 to 10 years and develop clear action plans detailing how you will live into this vision. You enjoy great preaching and good music. What seems to be missing is clarity around your vision for the future; how you are making a difference in the Village of Milford and beyond. A congregation that is appealing to and engaging for younger people is one that is clearly making an impact, making a difference in the world around them. And, a strong belief in the vision and direction

of an organization is one of the primary reasons why people give of their resources to support and further the mission.

The challenges facing Milford Presbyterian are many and great. The church has an opportunity to dream and participate with God in the creation of your future. One thing is certain, you cannot continue the path you're currently on, and expect the congregation to have another 180 years out in front of you. The congregation needs a rebirth, a turnaround, a season of new beginnings. You cannot continue to drift and expect that the situation next year will be very different from last year.

If there is agreement that there is a need for turnaround, then an action plan needs to be developed that actually leads toward different outcomes from what you have been experiencing in recent years. Horizons is ready to help you in this next season of transition.

- If the congregation decides to reinvent themselves and grow, make sure you have a viable strategy and put the necessary resources behind it.
- If the decision is made to not grow, give attention to how you can best care for your members and their needs in the years ahead.

C. Senior Pastor's influence – the feedback shows that the senior pastor is highly valued and respected – which is exciting! And, Very Rare. Bold leadership from Bryant, particularly with major donors and in preaching will be a key to success.

Remember: God will not call persons to give sacrificially to simply remodel a tired facility. Sacrificial giving is always in response to God's Vision to reach people through life-changing events and experiences. Ignite a fresh vision for a new season of vibrant mission at Milford Presbyterian Church!

Conclusion:

My conclusion is that conditions currently exist at Milford Presbyterian for a successful campaign to fund some of the proposed projects at a level of \$500,000 to \$550,000 dollars. The church's ability to reach this goal will be impacted by its attention to the factors influencing success elaborated above. Failure to catalyze momentum and ignoring the keys to success can result in falling short of this range. The church certainly possesses the capacity to significantly surpass this estimate; but, for this to occur, it will be heavily dependent upon generating clearly observable momentum and the early surfacing of leadership gifts beyond what can be identified at this

point. It would only take three or four significant gifts indicated early on to raise this projected level substantially.

Survey

1. About how long have you been attending Milford Presbyterian?

Average Tenure 28.01+ years / Range of tenure 2 years—68 years

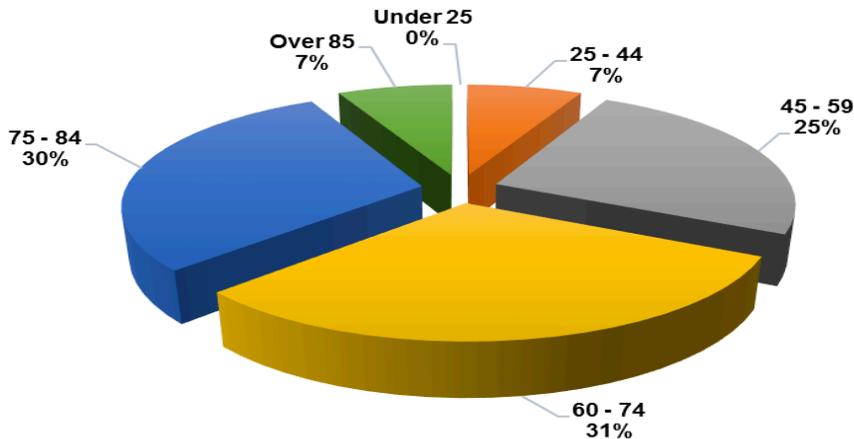
- The 78 respondents to the question have a collective 2185+ years of tenure as a part of the congregation
- 6 respondents (7.7%) have been a part of the congregation 5 years or less
- 5 respondents (6.4%) have been a part of the congregation between 6 and 10 years
- 24 respondents (30.8%) have been a part of the congregation more than 40 years

Reflections:

These numbers represent great stability and a significant base of wisdom and experience. At the same time, an average tenure of close to a third of a century leads me to wonder how easy, or challenging, it might be to break into the existing relationship circles at MPC. I'm not sure if you have a stated goal of the number of new families you are trying to engage in the life of the congregation each year. If not, consider defining a target. Only once a target is identified can specific action plans be developed to lead you toward achieving the stated target.

2. What is your age range?

under 25 - 0
25-44 - 6
45-59 - 20
60-74 - 25
75-84 - 24
over 85 - 6



3. What word or phrase best characterizes your understanding of what this church is all about?

Reflections:

It is an open, caring, conservative, traditional, “Church on The Corner” that is “family” to many. The congregation is perceived to be accessible, open and welcoming to all, and gradually receiving newer, younger members and their families. A couple of those responding suggested that the congregation has declined some over the years, becoming older and tired.

4. What do you feel is the most significant opportunity facing this congregation today?

Reflections:

The dominant opportunity theme in the responses here is to grow; to attract and engage younger people and families. The challenges of the aging facility and lack of parking are mentioned by several respondents. These challenges are barriers to your stated desire to grow by reaching younger people.

Local congregations have opportunities to grow and thrive, theologically, because God’s hopes and dreams for you and your church dramatically eclipse your perceptions of those opportunities (Ephesians 3:20,21). I encourage Leadership to prayerfully reflect on

the ideas that have been shared in this section. Weigh the best of these ideas against your current action plans and modify as necessary. Which of these Opportunity ideas have the most potential to impact the most people, while contributing to the congregation's growth?

At the same time, it is likely that Milford Presbyterian is trying to do too much and too many different ministry and program initiatives. Are there existing ministry or program initiatives that have run out of gas, or that are consuming increasing amounts of resources to keep floating? If so, standing down these "out of gas" initiatives may free up some organizational bandwidth and resources to enable the initiation of new ministry to address new opportunities.

One sentiment that I heard repeatedly in various expressions at Milford Presbyterian is the idea that we need more younger people, or younger families with children. The central question that needs a clear contextualized answer is; *What makes us a place that families want to grow and raise their families?* Once you have identified a clear answer to this question, you can begin to develop Action Plans that will lead toward the desired outcomes.

5. What excites you the most about the congregation?

Reflections:

People and the relationships they share in the congregation are the core of Milford Presbyterian and the root of much of the "excitement" expressed in response to this question.

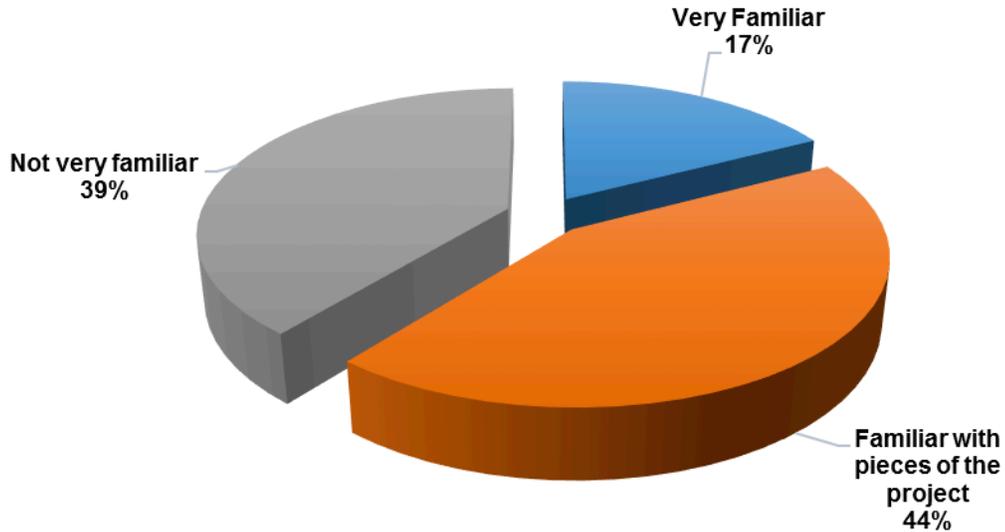
The thing that concerns me is that the thoughts expressed here are predominately rooted inside the community of faith, rather than pointing outside to the mission and impact you are having in Milford and beyond. How are you changing lives and making a difference in the village of Milford? How are you generating discernible energy and momentum in the congregation? Try to engage everyone (members and guests) in hands-on ministry. Many of the elements cited in the comments here can be characterized as strengths, central components of the congregation's personality or culture:

Friendliness, fellowship, caring, openness, strength of the music ministry, and the Pastor's preaching and teaching, the commitment to missions and downtown Milford.

These strengths provide a solid base on which to build a new chapter in the life of the church as you turn from an inward focus to an outward focus.

6. How familiar are you with the church's improvement plans?

Very familiar - 12
Familiar with pieces of the project - 30
Not very familiar - 27



Analysis:

A majority of those responding (61%) are familiar at some level with the projects / plans. People spoke positively about the communication the leadership has had about the projects so far. The challenge going forward will be to help people go deeper in their understanding of the various facets of the projects and helping persons connect the projects with Milford Presbyterian's vision and ministry in the community.

Those responding understand the need to keep the facility up and to make it functional for the congregation's needs. The need for expanded parking was mentioned by one person, and another suggested the current Handicapped Parking was "inadequate." A self-described "elderly lady" said she was excited about the prospect of a new elevator.

7. How do you envision these plans enhancing the congregation's ministry in the community?

Reflections:

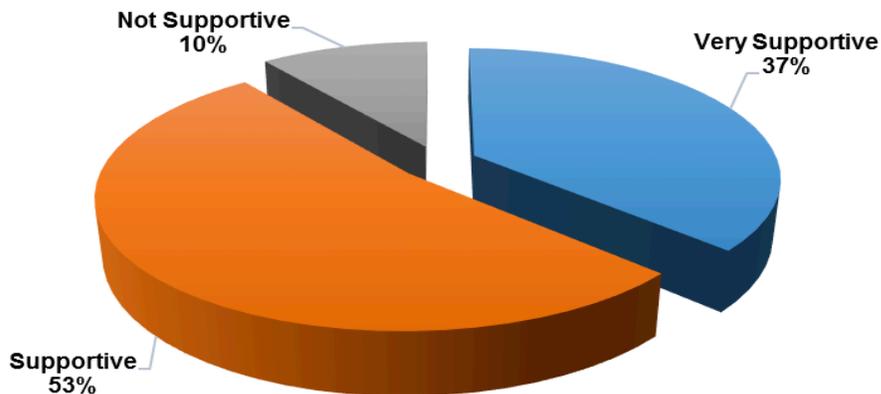
Those responding seem to understand the need to keep your aging facility presentable and functional. This question is central to project and campaign development. Congregational renovation plans need to

be clearly tied to difference making (to the extent possible) in the congregation's ministry. Campaign-related projects need to have a widely understood and compelling reason for inclusion in the proposed campaign. The more compelling, the better.

As the project scope is sharpened, and communication around the specific details of the projects are made available over the next several months, clarity about the intended impact of the projects will fuel momentum.

8. How supportive are you of the decision to conduct a capital campaign in order to fund these projects?

Very supportive - 18
Supportive - 40
Not supportive - 4



Analysis:

This is the most important question on the survey. 90% of those responding are either supportive or very supportive. For a campaign to succeed we generally need at least 65% in the Supportive / Very Supportive categories. Even though there is strong support for conducting the capital campaign for some of these projects, there is still a need for abundant communication and conversations around which projects will be addressed in the campaign, their scope, and how they each support the mission of the congregation. People understand and affirm the need to maintain the congregation's infrastructure. Leadership can help to foster increasing confidence by helping people see the big picture beyond the projects targeted in this campaign. What are the other issues that need to be addressed 8+ years ahead

to keep the facility and the ministry of the congregation functioning at peak capacity? Concerns about the aging facility and the lack of parking are voiced by several persons in different ways throughout the Survey. Help people understand the plans for addressing these perennial challenges.

9. What important factors (attitudes, realities, experiences) might hinder the success of the proposed campaign?

Reflections:

Responses to this question shine a spotlight into people's feelings about the realities of Milford Presbyterian as they experience them, and on possible barriers to a successful campaign. The dominant factor highlighted by several comments is the perceived diminishing of the congregation in recent years. The question is simple; is there enough critical mass, and positive energy as people consider the future, to fuel these projects forward? In any proposed project, it will be helpful for church leadership to consider the various barriers expressed here (and elsewhere) and articulate clear responses to them.

Raising money is challenging with the economic challenges we have been experiencing. Limited numbers of people are tithing, or even giving in some cases. Your congregation is growing older, and you have a number of parishioners on fixed incomes. Two persons mentioned the need for a growth plan, or a strategic plan to help the congregation move forward.

10. Do you feel the church's leadership is appropriate for this season in the congregation's life?

Yes on pastor – 59 (97%)

No on pastor – 2 (3%)

Yes on lay leadership teams – 52 (96%)

No on lay leadership teams – 2 (4%)

Analysis:

Belief in the appropriateness (and capability) of Leadership is crucial to a successful campaign effort; as well as crucial to overall congregational vitality. On the pastoral side, you are blessed with a strong Pastor in Bryant. He seems to be very well received by many in the congregation.

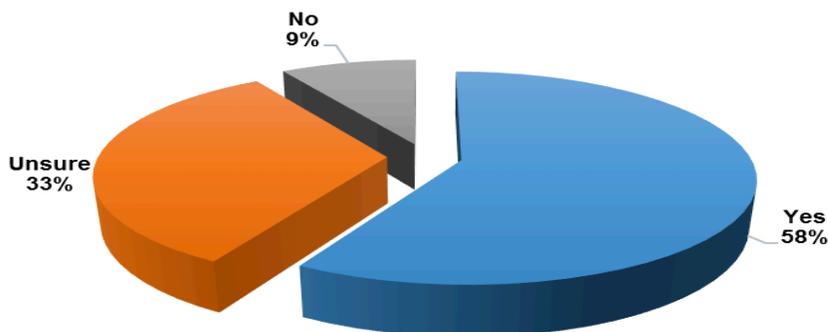
The lead pastor in any church is the most significant catalyst in a capital campaign. Those responding generally have a strong trust and confidence in Bryant and will respond to his guidance. His preaching is greatly valued. He must play a strong role in communicating the emerging vision for Milford Presbyterian and these projects, and seeking gifts to underwrite that vision.

Confidence in lay leadership is relatively strong as well. A couple of comments suggest that the perennial challenge of broadening the leadership pool by strengthening the leadership pipeline may be a problem at MPC. Many mainline congregations unnecessarily tie-up gifted laypersons by having them serve on Committees. When people are tied up in committee responsibilities it often prohibits their involvement in life-changing ministry. Churches do not need nearly as many people on committees as they think they do to run the administrative tasks of the church.

Engagement is crucial to achieving your potential at MPC. The objective is for every member to have both a place to belong and a place to serve. To the degree that persons are not engaged in these ways, it will put a damper on the congregation's potential capacity, in all facets of its ministry. Not just financial. Systems can be implemented that help to track each member and constituent's engagement with the life of the congregation. These systems are essential for congregations seeking to be relevant and engaging in our changing world.

11. Would you prayerfully consider a 3-year gift (over and above your annual contribution) to support this proposed capital campaign?

Yes - 39
Unsure - 22
No - 6

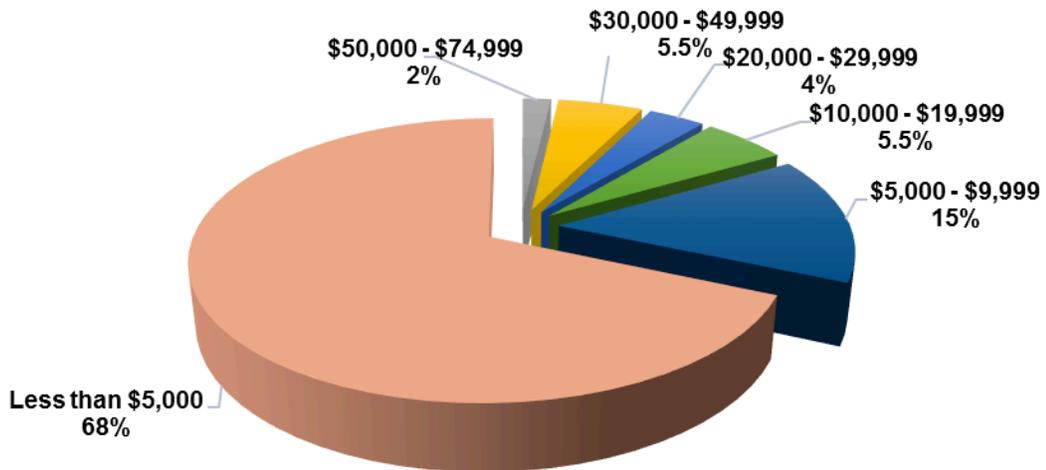


Analysis:

Certainly, these were off-the-cuff responses. A person's interest, passion, and commitments around any project has everything to do with the exact nature of the project itself, and their prayerful consideration of how God is leading them to be a part of the congregation's future. 58% of those responding are open to prayerfully considering a gift in the proposed campaign. A third are Unsure. Six households, 9% of those responding to the question, have already made a decision to not support the campaign for whatever reasons. Over the next few months as the details and implications of the projects become clearer for people, and as people engage with their own prayerful discernment, participation and momentum will increase.

12. What range might you consider for a 3-year commitment (over and above your current tithes and offerings to the annual budget)? This is not a pledge but an initial indicator. (Your estimated range will remain confidential.)

\$100,000 or more - 0
\$75,000 - \$99,999 - 0
\$50,000 - \$74,999 - 1
\$30,000 - \$49,999 - 3
\$20,000 - \$29,999 - 2
\$10,000 - \$19,999 - 3
\$5,000 - \$9,999 - 8
Less than \$5,000 - 37



Analysis:

It is common for people to skip this question. Also, it is common in these surveys at this stage of project and campaign development, not to have yet seen the majority of pace-setting gifts surface. However, the success of the campaign will, in our experience, depend on surfacing major leadership gifts early. Such gifts provide crucial momentum, raising the belief level in the congregation.

The responses we did receive to this question indicate possible gifts; these are not actual commitments. The responses summarized above all combine to create pieces of a puzzle, or parts of financial possibilities for the proposed campaign. For example: to set the stage for succeeding in a campaign for \$500,000 over a three-year pledge period the church will need:

- At least one gift in the range of \$50,000 to \$70,000 or so, about 10% to 14% of total dollars pledged; The Survey's indicate 1 possible gift in the \$50,000+ range.
- There will need to be at least two gifts of \$30,000+; the Survey's indicate 3 possible gift in the range of \$30,000-\$49,999.
- There will need to be about 6 to 8 gifts of \$10,000+; the Survey's indicate 5 possible gifts in the range of \$10,000-\$29,999.
- And, there would need to be about 24 gifts between \$5,000 and \$9,999; the Surveys indicate 8 possible gifts in this range so far.

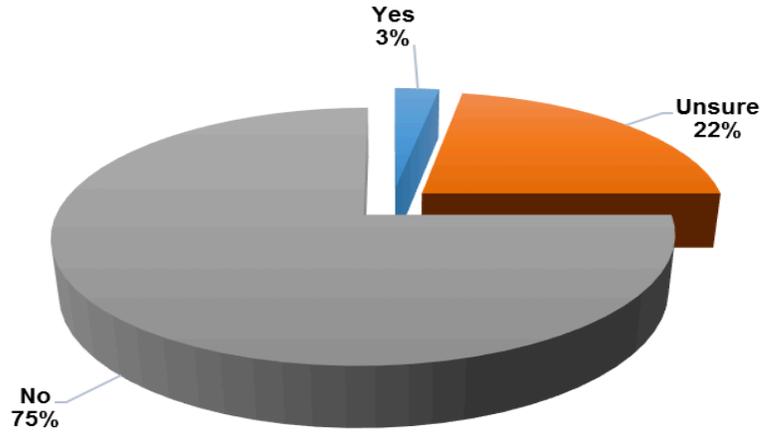
These leadership gifts will set the trajectory for what is possible for the congregation to raise. Surfacing these pace-setting gifts early in the campaign will have a positive impact on encouraging others who can consider gifts in these ranges. The importance of leaders leading in generosity cannot be over emphasized.

Obviously, there are persons in the church who are on very limited fixed incomes. Others on fixed incomes are fixed very well. Everyone is in a different place.

Today, MPC is at an early stage of determining the proposed scope and nature of the project. Several top tier leadership gift possibilities have been articulated already. I believe that additional leadership gifts can be cultivated and grown over time. MPC has a number of families who can give at a significant level, I believe several will step up and lead in this important effort. People understand that maintaining the viability and usability of your facility is a decisive step (among many) into a more vibrant future.

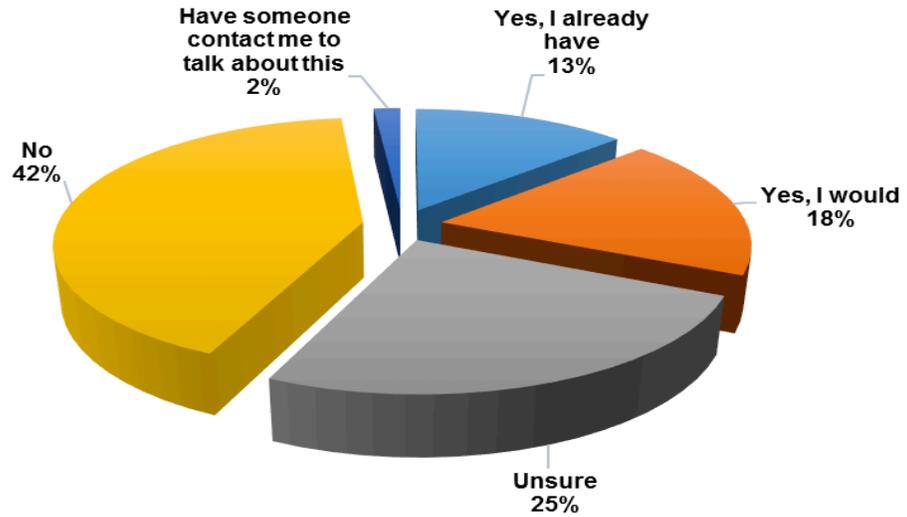
13. Might your gift include any non-cash gifts of appreciated assets such as stocks, bonds, or real estate?

Yes - 1
Unsure - 8
No - 27



14. Would you consider including Milford Presbyterian Church in your will or estate planning?

Yes, I already have - 8
Yes, I would - 11
Unsure - 15
No - 25
Have someone contact me to talk about this - 1



Reflections:

The responses to this question reveal encouraging news for the church. 13% of those responding to this question have already had the foresight to remember the church in their estate planning. Another 18% would consider taking this step. The key is to routinely provide opportunities every year that are designed to educate your members in the various aspects of estate planning, and the tools available to accomplish the desires of your members. Bequest giving can be a significant win-win for both the donor and the church.

And most important, but at the same time the most neglected aspect of bequest giving in churches: The church needs to directly ask for the consideration of such gifts.

At Milford Presbyterian you are squandering an incredible opportunity to insure a vital future by not having an endowment to securely receive these bequest gifts that persons are leaving, or might leave to the church. An endowment can provide the financial bandwidth for the congregation to do more effective mission and turn into a fresh future in years to come. You are fortunate to have the best resource of its kind in the country available to you, the Presbyterian Foundation. I encourage you to contact Stephen Keizer at your earliest convenience to address this gaping need (866-317-0751; Stephen.keizer@presbyterianfoundation.org).