

First Parish in Lincoln

Strategic Planning  
Roundtable Discussions  
May 2021

Discussion Questions and Companion Slides

# Objectives and Ground Rules

## Objectives

- We hope to hear your current perspective on some important issues for the church
  - Today's discussion will start to inform decisions that we may need to make at some point in the future
  - It will also provide valuable input to the Search Committee
- We expect that by starting to discuss these issues, everyone will have a broader perspective on what others in the community think

## Ground Rules and Expectations

- We have three discussion questions for you today. Decisions are not being made today. There will be no vote today. This is the start of the conversation
- We hope to hear the thinking of all participants – even if your thoughts seem to be at odds with the thinking of others
- Today is not meant to be a debate or a critique of others' ideas, but a surfacing of your thoughts
- We have several topics to discuss today. In order that we may hear from everyone, and stay within our planned 90-minute time schedule, we ask that you please try to be succinct

# Summary of Strategic Planning Research

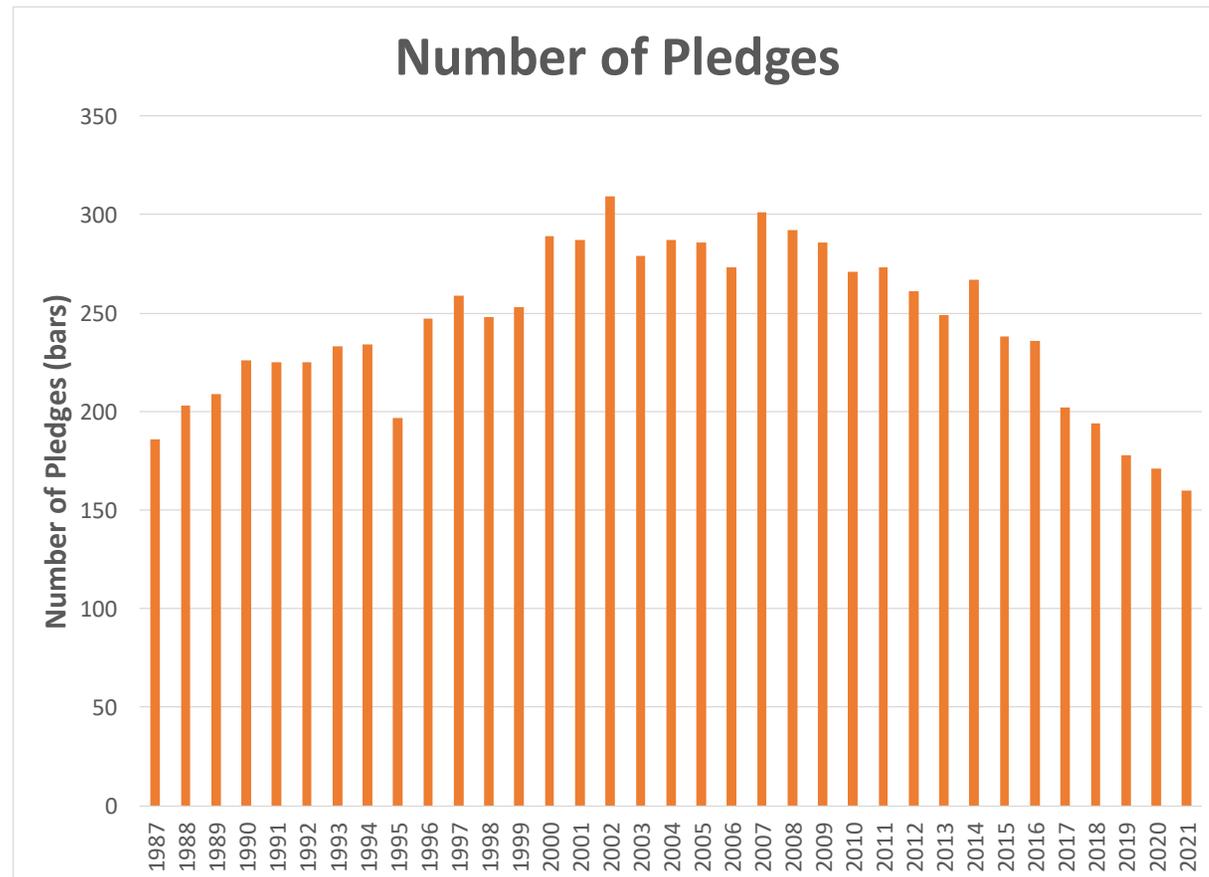
- We envision a strong and healthy FPL, internally nourishing and externally impactful
- However, membership trends cause concern for our future
- There are growth examples that can inspire us
- We have many strengths to build on, including an engaged congregation and time to strengthen our base
- There are challenges ahead that we will need to address, and may require some difficult decisions
- As much as anything, we will need to be engaged: with our time, our best thinking, and our financial resources

This is a summary of material presented to the congregation on March 28<sup>th</sup>, and available here:  
<https://www.fplincoln.org/posts/transition-team-and-strategic-planning-update-3-28-21/>

# Discussion Topic One: Investing in Growth

## Background:

The year refers to the fiscal year ending June. The pledge drive for each year is in the previous spring. In other words, 2021 here refers to the spring 2020 pledge drive.



# Discussion Topic One: Investing in Growth

Are we willing to invest more in order to attempt to reverse the membership trend?

- With our volunteer time?
- With our financial contributions?
- With draws above 4%<sup>1</sup> of our endowment?

1. Draws above 4% are generally considered unsustainable

# Discussion Topic Two: Areas of Focus

Our mission comprises diverse elements that are important to members of the congregation

- Caring for each other when in need
- Community building within FPL
- Community building outside FPL
- Environmental activism
- Financial support of others
- Music
- Sermons and religious ceremony
- Service to others
- Social activism
- Spiritual education and exploration for children
- Spiritual education and exploration for adults

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Hypothetical examples of areas of primary focus:

- Emphasis on music. World-class musical director. Frequent concerts. Music is central to religious education. Many members participate, and there are several musical groups. Common for parishioners to join for music program.
- Emphasis on spirituality. Create “must-hear” sermons, compelling spiritual guest speakers, adult and child religious education, and spirituality through nature and music. Fill up the church.
- Emphasis on activism. Shift spending to outreach and focus volunteer effort to become a leader on social and environmental causes, attracting interested people that will become pledging members.
- Emphasis on community. Focus on being active and known in town, community events, volunteer service to the local community, attracting enough locals to stop the decline in pledges.

## Discussion Two: Areas of Focus

Which programmatic components do we most need, to ensure FPL remains vibrant and financially strong for another generation?

Which elements should be particularly strong in our new settled minister?

# Discussion Topic Three: Demographic Focus

## Background:

- National and regional trends show declining church participation
  - UUA churches and membership have been steady
- Aging town and congregation population
- Sustained downward trend in school-aged children over the last decade
  - Demographic trends point to a continuation of this pattern, though some see indications of growth among younger families

# Discussion Topic Three: Demographic Focus

Which groups offer us the best opportunity to attract engaged new members?

- Families with young children
- Families with high school children
- Empty nesters
- Recent retirees
- Elders

# Closing Discussion

What is the most important conclusion you draw from today's discussion?

- Is there anything else on this general topic that is on your mind? (note cards)