

# ASSESSMENT

Southport Christian Church  
Indianapolis, Indiana

September 20, 2010  
Rick Morse



Church  
Extension



**Assessment**  
**Southport Christian Church**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana**

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## I. WHY THIS ASSESSMENT?

The Apostle Paul, in his letters, makes clear God's call for Christians to live together in healthy congregations. We are to understand who we are and who our neighbor is. We are to develop faithful, effective and innovative ministry that shares the Gospel message—the good news of God's unconditional love and justice—with a hurting world.

While the message of God's love remains constant, ministry today doesn't look like First Century ministry. In fact, today's ministry doesn't look like ministry even a decade ago! Using the Gospel as the guide, healthy congregations continually assess and develop appropriate ministry for their changing context. **Sometimes, once-thriving congregations find themselves in declining health. They need help to discern God's unique call again; help to regain their vitality—or to help to direct their remaining assets into the ministry channels they determine to be most appropriate to their mission.**

**To renew their passion, congregations also may need a little help looking objectively at their situation.** A small book called, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*, describes how organizations conspire to hide from the truth. They are afraid to (or don't want to) see realities that represent unwelcome change.

During the past year, it has become more than apparent to the leadership that Southport's neighborhood is changing rapidly. Numerous crimes have been committed on the church's property, fewer neighbors are participating in the church, the congregation is aging, and as they looked at the future of the congregation the leadership began exploring ideas about how Southport might adapt to its new context for ministry. The leadership of Southport requested this report from Church Extension.

Disciples General Ministry, Church Extension—which has been facilitating capital funding for building projects for new and existing Disciples congregations since 1883—has a passion for helping sustain and bring new life to Disciples congregations. Together with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, we hope this assessment helps this partnership in three ways. The first intent of this assessment is to help your congregation come to clarity about a hard decision you need to make in terms of the use of your assets/resources for mission. The second intent is to give the congregational leaders tools for defining a future story in mission that is true both to historic commitments and relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> century need. The third intent is to help the congregation begin to make the shift from an “attractional” model of ministry (where people “come to the church” as a place to get their needs met) to a “missional” model of ministry where disciples are empowered to “go out from the church” to live as Christian people in the world. This assessment tool is designed to bring together the congregation with an assessment and reflection process to help your congregation be intentional about discerning God's call for present and future mission.

## **WHERE DID THIS REPORT COME FROM?**

Data in this report came from congregational records and from the past 10 years of the congregation's reports to the *Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. Information collected includes demographic data about the participants in the church, their approximate tenure in the congregation, income and expense reports for the past three years and a current balance sheet. This information about your congregation is collected, sorted, and measured to give all of us a better idea of the factors that impact your congregation's ministry in this time and place.

Other data for this report was the result of demographic research provided by our provider, Mission Insite. This provider extracts data from the most recent update of U.S. Census data (which is updated every 6 months). It also utilizes data from Experian, a financial research company.

Your congregation's leaders worked closely with Rick Morse, Vice President of New Church Ministry and Mission Initiatives from Church Extension, who wrote this assessment. Rick has more than 30 years of congregational experience, and has developed the training infrastructure for the Disciples new church movement which has now started more than 670 new congregations in different contexts in North America with an 80% sustainability rate. He has also developed the New Beginnings service which has now served more than 150 existing congregations and is now used by 3 denominations. He is author of "From Our Doorsteps, Ministry Planning that Makes A Difference" which was released this spring, and is already required reading in some seminaries.

## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

On Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 AM (following worship) there will be an informational meeting for those who want to gain clarity on this report. A presentation will be made as an introduction to the particularly challenging portions of this report, with a question and answer period for participants.

By Tuesday evening, October 12<sup>th</sup>, a video of this presentation will be made available on-line for those who wish to watch it. Congregants may also email Rick Morse at [RMorse@churchextension.org](mailto:RMorse@churchextension.org) at any point with questions related to understanding the report. The Board would like for Southport members to be as informed about our conditions of the church as they are and gain whatever insights the congregation would like to add.

Starting on October 17<sup>th</sup>, you are encouraged to attend one of four opportunities for you to participate in a “World Café” discussion regarding the future vision of Southport Christian Church.

The “World Café” model has been extensively developed to help large groups gain deep insight from one another as they name conditions of the church, and try to discern what God might be calling our church to do.

These sessions will be held:

World Café #1 & 2	17-Oct	4:00 & 6:00 PM
World Café #3	20-Oct	1:00 PM
World Café #4	TBA (27 <sup>th</sup> or 30 <sup>th</sup> )	9:30 AM

At the conclusion of these four sessions, the “Café” hosts will review the “harvest” of information gathered by each session. This will then be presented in a report form to the Board of the Church that will then formulate a resolution for the congregation.

**But your first step is to take a look at the congregation’s current context and condition.** You will find in this report an analysis of your congregation now, and a number of options that seem most appropriate for the congregation moving forward.

**This process is ultimately designed to help the congregation have a healthy—and holy—conversation that engages all interested members in creating a God sized vision of our witness together.**

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 1950's the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) started more than 180 new congregations. Today only 8 of those churches are viable, with Southport being one of the few. A dramatic loss in congregational vitality has occurred for the other 172 congregations because they did not adapt to the changing needs of their community.

Southport Christian Church has been somewhat insulated from the changes that other congregations started in the 50's experienced. First it has had a fairly stable community instead of the high mobility rates experienced by other churches. Secondly, it has extended family members who will attend Southport regardless of where they live. And third, the congregation has a high number (31 at last count) of retired clergy or pastors who work on the regional or general church level.

Leaders of Southport have wisely begun to look at the church's future. You cannot help but notice that the average age of participants in the church are much older than they once were. The church celebrates many more funerals than it does baptisms, and the church is not growing despite the fact that the immediate community grew by 13% in the last decade.

The context of Southport's area of ministry is changing, and Southport must consider how it is going to adapt to these changing times.

The following report is an assessment of the congregation, with three possible strategies for future development. The report demonstrates that the church is on a plateau in terms of its growth. It shows that the church has a vital program, and that people are growing in their faith. It demonstrates that the context has changed, and that Southport is not well matched for its target area.

The report shows that the congregation has ample financial capacity, and that the current facility is in great condition and is "right sized" for the size of the congregation.

Through the use of future stories, three strategies for a vision are outlined. The first is what could happen if the congregation was to relocate. The second is what could happen if the church stayed put, and changed its ministry. The third story is what might happen if the church chose to develop a new satellite.

The story that was not written however is what could happen if Southport chose to do nothing toward adapting to a new future. It goes without saying that a church that fails to adapt, particularly in this time, will not be around for another generation.

### III. CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY



Southport Christian Church recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The congregation began in the 1950's as a daughter church to Olive Branch Christian Church. During that decade, the Southport area had grown dramatically with new housing that was filled with many veterans who were given GI loans for their first homes.

Church growth was made possible by a paradigm shift in American culture from the neighborhood church (Olive Branch) to a drive in church (Southport). The housing of the time was modest by today's standards, with many single car, attached garages, and simple three-bedroom ranch homes. The inhabitants of these homes raised their families in these homes and provided a stable environment for families in the new suburban setting.

Since many participants of the Olive Branch church were moving further south of Indy, Olive Branch made the bold decision to start a daughter church. This was easy because Olive Branch was filled beyond capacity and the church had a passion for evangelism.

The story of Olive Branch Christian Church however has had impact on future planning for Southport. Many Southport members claim a heritage to the Olive Branch days, and see their departure from Olive Branch to the new church as the start of that congregation's decline.

The decline of Olive Branch however is more complex than the start of Southport. The construction of roads through the Olive Branch area, plus the development of a major interstate system in the 1960's cut Olive Branch off from residential areas. Much more could be written about this congregation's decline; however that is not the purpose of this report. The most important fact regarding this is that the decline of Olive Branch has held Southport cautious in determining future ways in which the congregation might adapt to its new surroundings.

The congregation began its life worshipping in a grade school across the street from the current church location. Eventually the church built its first unit (which is now the fellowship hall) where the church experienced the explosive growth of new residents moving into the area. In the 1970's the church built its current worship facility which has been updated numerous times. The last major renovations included the building of the gathering area, and upgrades in the Christian Education area.

Southport has had numerous retired ministers in its congregation, as well as numerous General and Regional Staff members. In 2009, a list of clergy in the congregation exceeded 30 individuals. The congregation has had excellent pastoral leadership in its history, many former pastors have moved on to more prestigious positions following their tenure at Southport. In the last decade Southport had 6 different senior pastors serve the congregation.

The congregation has also been blessed with several large extended families. Unlike most congregations in the U.S., it is unusual to have a number of generations of the same family still engaged at the church (a trend that is starting to change at Southport).

The church offers numerous missional activities, and Southport is known for its strong mission support by both financial gifts, and the gift of mission trips throughout the U.S. in rebuilding communities damaged by floods or hurricanes. A year never goes by without Southport sending a group or two somewhere in the world where there is significant need.

### **BY THE NUMBERS**

Your congregational history includes lives, words, songs and achievements that defy measurement. But this report, you may already have noticed, dwells on data – numbers, numbers, and numbers! Why do we seem so interested in numbers? In part, we pay attention to numbers because they help us track changes over time; they show growth or decline in giving or attendance, along with other information that signals the trends of the last decade that seem to impact your congregation. Numbers are *not the only* measure of vitality. Yet numbers provide insight into the direction the congregation is heading.

We also track numbers because the size of a congregation determines the best approach to ministry in that context. Lyle Schaller, a leading church consultant, points out that size makes all the difference in the world in how a congregation operates. And if your congregation, for example, was once a large church that has since become a small church, this information may be critical to understanding the way forward... Most likely, your solutions today will not be accomplished the way they were in days of your former glory. Understanding this is half to battle in regaining your footing as you strive to be faithful to the congregation's call.

### **SMALL CHURCHES FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS**

**Small “Family-sized” churches** (60 members or fewer) tend to resemble extended families and thus emphasize fellowship, relationships, intimacy, belonging and member involvement. People matter more than performance, so high value is placed on volunteering, rather than on professional skills one may possess for the work that needs

to be conducted. Churches with fewer members actually rely more heavily on lay volunteers. These small churches tend to be lay-led organizations, and thus they may be reluctant to hand over too much authority to the minister. The perception of the minister's job is to love the members – and that relationship trumps even mediocre preaching. In the estimation of small congregations, ministers need interpersonal skills more than academic credentials or leadership qualities. The small-church minister is but one leader among many—and, in many case, may not be the most influential.

### **BIGGER ISN'T BETTER—JUST DIFFERENT**

Congregations in the pastor-driven congregations, in the 61- to 130-member range tend to hand over more responsibility for care of the congregation to the pastor. The pastor brings proposals to the church board for decision. Most decisions involve the pastor in one way or another. Lay leaders are primarily those who are empowered by or taught by the pastor.

As these congregations creep into the 130-to-200-member range (program-size churches) expectations shift again. Those who attend program-size churches seek performance more than relationships. They want quality programs, well-organized activities and professional leaders. Prospective volunteers know that there are probably many other members who are better qualified for a particular task. They will be expected to do it very well. So, they are more hesitant to volunteer. The incentive structure of the large church discourages lay involvement. The senior minister of a large church needs administrative skills, and strengths in supervision and leadership of both large and small groups. Member care is a lower priority in the larger church. Care happens, but it is delegated to other staff members. The size and complexity of larger churches give great power to the senior minister, who, because of her or his position at the hub of church communication networks, may be the only person with adequate access to the activities, problems and concerns of the church as a whole. The pastor in this setting does not cast the vision, but works with the leadership to develop the vision.

Congregations that exceed 200 in worship tend to take on more of a “corporate” style of organization. Decision making is relegated to smaller groups of people, and participants do not feel the need to be engaged in decision making. The church staff takes on more responsibilities for the actual “execution” of program as the church grows larger. Congregations of this type engage volunteers in established program areas (i.e. teaching Sunday School, or adult classes and relational group activities). The pastor in this kind of setting casts the vision of the church and helps the leadership of the church reach the bench marks needed for success.

So, as we look at numbers, we are also looking at models of governance and leadership. A congregation that was once pretty sizable might be struggling to continue to ACT like a program-size or pastor-driven church, when in reality, the congregation is a family-size church. Is the congregation struggling to live into its current reality? Some of what we learn in our assessment can help you find solutions to problems associated with size.

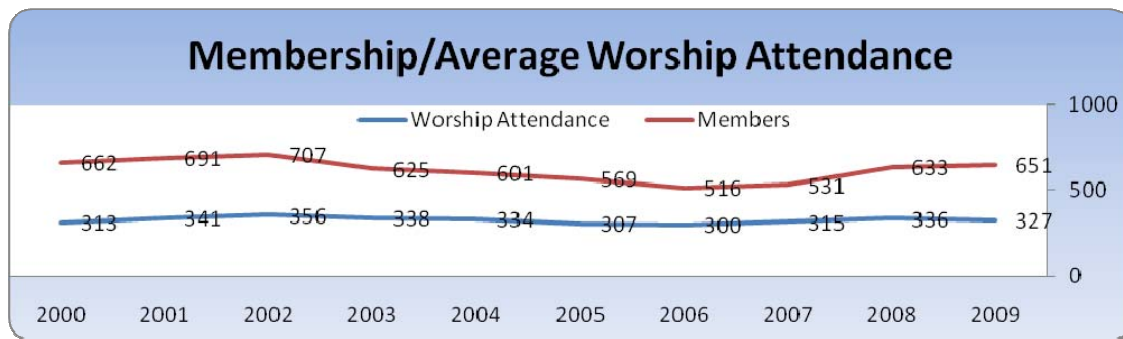
The leadership of Southport Christian Church is highly aware of these dynamics and how they play out at the church. During their conversations prior to calling the pastor, the leaders agreed that Southport acts like at times like a pastoral sized church, and sometimes even like a family sized congregation even though the size indicates it is a corporate sized congregation. In the past this dynamic has led to mixed expectations about the roles of clergy within this church.

To learn more about this topic, and your church’s size, we recommend reading Alice Mann’s books, *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations*, and *Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition*.

**10-YEAR AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE/MEMBERSHIP**

Let’s look at Average Worship Attendance over the last 10 years. Trends in attendance offer other clues about the health of the congregation.

As demonstrated in the chart below, the congregation has experienced a **PLATEAU** in Average Worship Attendance (AWA) and Membership over the past 10 years. Trajectories are shown on the chart (see straight line) to show the overall trend in the figures, taking into consideration the “ups” and the “downs.” Average Worship Attendance (AWA) is the most helpful measurement of member engagement in a congregation, so we pay special attention to this figure. This data is compiled from the past 10 years of your congregation’s reports to the *Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

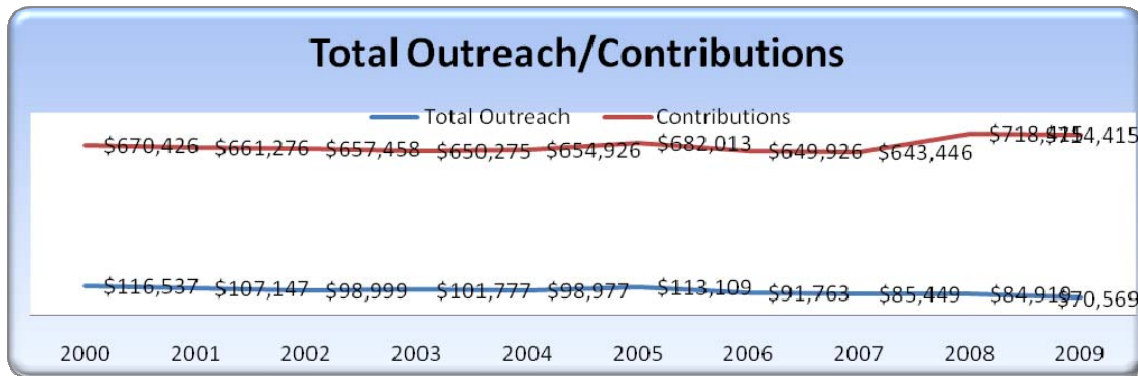


This plateau is not uncommon given the stable population growth rate of 1%. In fact, this plateau is uncommonly healthy given the fact that the church has had a 10 year history of brief pastoral tenures. This does not mean the church should be satisfied with this prospect though since the report will later demonstrate that the congregant spread is over a very vast area. This plateau will indicate less active engagement in Southport’s immediate context.

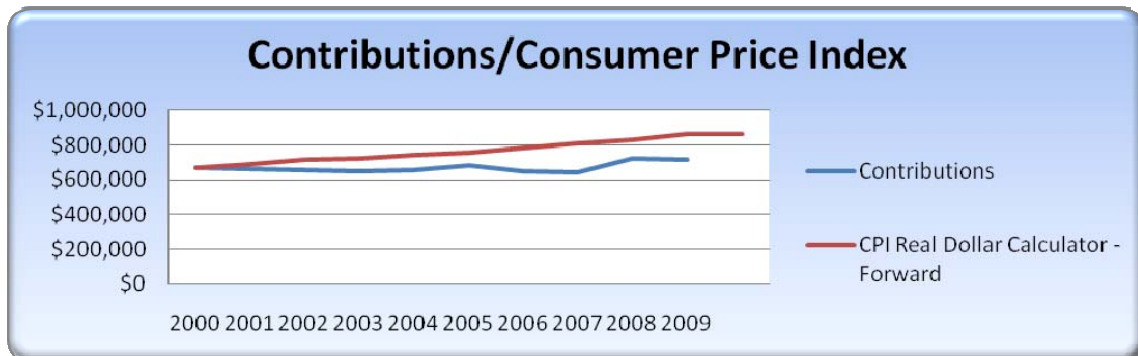
## 10-YEAR GIVING

Congregational giving is also an indicator of member engagement. We pay attention to this number because as participants deepen their level of engagement with the church, their giving usually follows. Often times this indicator lags behind the Average Worship Attendance figures. That is, AWA may decline or grow at a faster rate than giving.

During the past 10 years, the congregation has reported **LEVEL INCOME** in their General Fund giving. This is the total income received by the church.



Income figures alone do not tell the whole numbers story. It is important to measure the congregation's giving against the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to see if giving has kept pace with inflation over the past 10 years. Congregations can actually increase their giving, but still have fewer funds for ministry because of inflation.

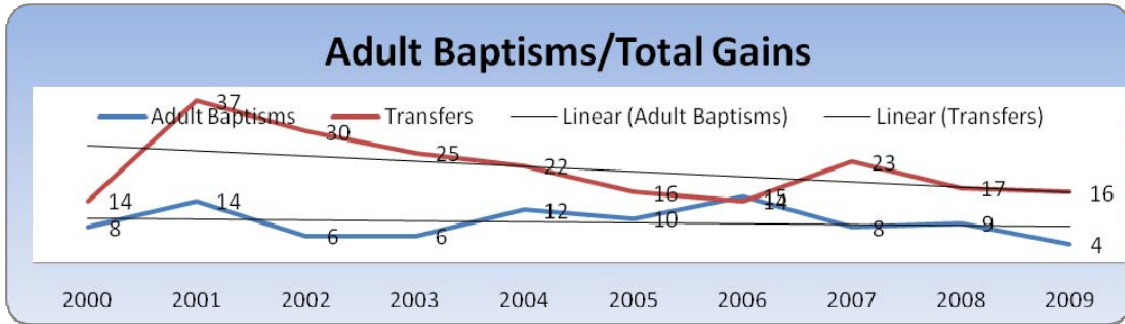


The chart above demonstrates that congregational giving **HAS NOT KEPT PACE with the CPI over the past 10 years**. This indicates declining engagement. While the gap does not seem large, it indicates more than \$100,000 loss in income compared with the church's income position 10 years ago.

## BAPTISMS/ADDITIONS

The final measurement of engagement in the past 10 years is the number of additions that the church has received. It is important to note the relationship between baptisms and transfers. Comparing these two figures speaks to the congregations' passion for reaching unchurched persons, OR caring for those who already made their commitment to Christ in some other place. Healthy churches have strong numbers in both areas.

The chart below demonstrates that the congregation has a **DECLINING NUMBER OF BAPTISMS AND ADDITIONS**. This is usually the characteristic of a congregation in decline since it is neither introducing new participants to the faith, nor helping existing members mature in their faith



As we consider the future of Southport Christian, it is important to note the church has been on a plateau for the past 10 years. A church on a long-term plateau will either experience decline or growth depending on its future ministry plan. A church cannot sustain a plateau for a long period.

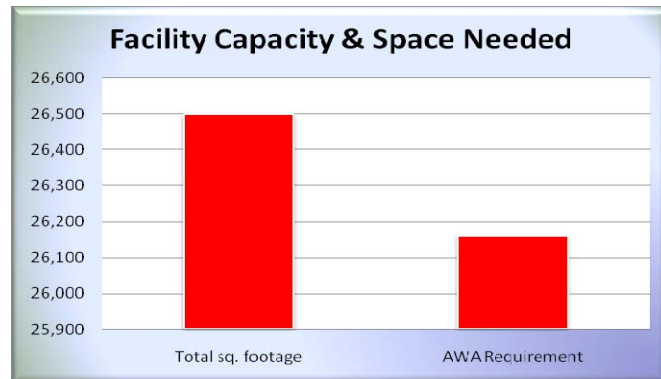
## IV.FACILITIES EVALUATION



In consideration of the congregation’s resources, it is important to evaluate the facilities to determine if they are of appropriate size for the current congregation. It is also important to consider whether there is a growing list of deferred maintenance issues or other features that may inhibit growth of the congregation.

Southport’s facilities are contained in one buildings located on a 9-acre lot. It is estimated that the facilities is approximately 26,500 sq. feet in size. The property may have a market value of about \$4.5 million.

The facility is “right sized” for the program of the congregation based on averages for congregations of this size with little surplus space.



## THE SACRED WALK

Worshippers begin what has been called “the sacred walk” the moment their foot hits pavement as they get out of their vehicle to begin the entrance into the building. This walk says volumes to members and visitors alike about the self-esteem and vitality of the congregation. The “sacred walk” helps worshipers prepare for the experience of worship at your church. For that reason, this walk should guide the worshiper clearly and directly—and as pleasantly as possible—to the sanctuary or even to office spaces. Signage and a clear, safe walkway are essential to this experience. The impression on guests continues inside the building. While they might not expect lavish facilities, guests will be made more welcome and comfortable by cleanliness, neatness and general care for the facility. Unkempt facility and grounds send an unintentional message: “This is not a place even WE like very much.” Clearly, that is not a very effective evangelism tool.

What follows is the impression the Consultant had upon embarking on the “sacred walk” at Southport Christian Church.

A. Location:

Southport is located on Epler across the street from Burkhart Elementary School. This school is the main source of visibility to the community. The facilities are set back from Epler some distance and difficult to see unless you are really looking for the site. The church recently updated signage on the site with a backlit sign, which is now covered with a banner. Both the original sign and banner contain more wording than necessary to identify the church and create interest in the congregation.

The congregation maintains a softball field and backstop on the property which demonstrates the congregation’s outreach—however the field is not identified as belonging to the church for that purpose (a missed opportunity for outreach)

Since Epler is primarily used as a connector between US 31 and SR 135, most vehicles pass without seeing the church. The church is fairly invisible to the community. To test that assumption the consultant asked the clerk of the neighboring Walgreen store and the BP gas station for directions to the church, neither clerk had heard of the church, even though there is a directional sign on the same corner.

B. Outside Appearance:

The building appears well maintained. It has a clearly defined entrance to the facility, with a clear glassed entry way making it inviting for visitors.

C. Parking lot and walk ways:

The church has adequate parking for its attendance size, and for the crossing of the two worship services. The lot is in good condition, and has lighting for evening events. The stripes appear fresh, and it is clear where to park..

Driving habits for each congregation vary widely. Some congregations’ average only one person per car parked in the lot; others pack in families. Still others are located in dense urban areas and pride themselves for being within walking distance of the local public transportation. The place in which a car is parked, and the control the church has over that parking also determines capacity. Architects have developed some formulas in estimating the worship capacity of your church, based on parking. Based on the location of the congregation’s identified parking, capacity is calculated on the chart below:

Parking	Spaces	AWA Avail.
On-site parking available	223	390.25
Off-site parking available	100	100
Street parking available	0	0
<b>Parking Capacity for Worship</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>490.25</b>
		Difference
		163.25

**D. Sanctuary:**

A recent update of worship space has been a major improvement. The worship space is flexible and can be used for many different kinds of worship events, such as the recently successful “Front Porch” series. The lighting, quality sound system, and projection screens have added great new dimensions for worship in the future.

Seating is in pews on a sloped floor. Because of the floor slope, this locks in the use of pews for the future. While comfortable, pews do not allow for flexibility of seating capacity as the church changes.

Based on generally accepted norms for congregational seating, it is estimated that the sanctuary has a seating capacity of Southport as noted on the chart below:

<b>Sanctuary Capacity</b>	Capacity	Max.	Min.	
Sanctuary Seating--main floor	350	280	140	
Sanctuary Seating--Balcony	0	0	0	
Sanctuary Seating--Choir	40	20	10	
	Capacity	Max.	Min.	Actual
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>327</b>

Based on generally accepted measurements, we know that when a sanctuary is more than 80 percent capacity on a regular basis, it will impact worship attendance with an overcrowded feeling. In the same manner, if a sanctuary is less than 40 percent of capacity it will also impact worship attendance as participants feel it is uncomfortably empty.

Based on the AWA, the sanctuary capacity is below capacity in the first service, and right sized for the second service. When services are combined, the church is frequently above comfortable capacity.

**E. Fellowship Space:**

Southport has a great fellowship space. It is easily accessible on the same floor level as the sanctuary and is frequently used by community groups as well as the congregation. It has a full service kitchen that meets commercial standards.

**F. Education Space:**

A recent upgrade has made major improvements in the educational space. The children’s space now has an effective “check-in” system for safety, with easily accessible restrooms. The space is kept clean, and there are few spaces that are cluttered (unlike most churches).

**G. Office/administration Space:**

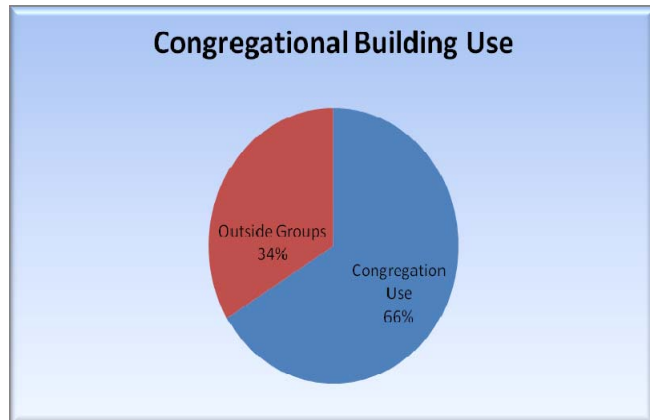
The office is located adjacent to the sanctuary. It has fairly updated equipment. The pastor’s study is directly adjacent to office staff; however associates are located in different parts of the building or across the hallway from the rest of staff.

#### H. Systems:

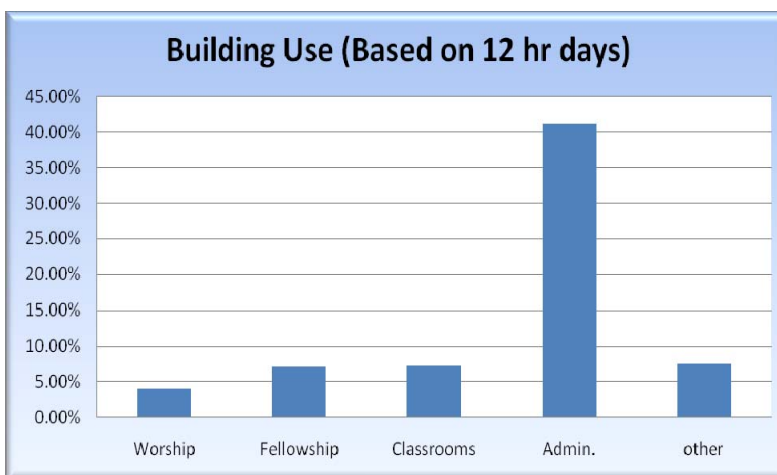
An energy audit was performed at Southport nearly 2 years ago. This audit found that all systems were in great condition, and were periodically serviced and are outliving their designed life-cycles. It was difficult in this audit to find many ways to improve systems within the church (except for cooling).

#### How the Facilities are used:

The church building is a valuable resource for both the congregation and the community. A good indicator of a congregation's willingness to engage a community is by looking at how the church uses this resource. Based on total building use, the pie chart demonstrates the percentage of total usage by outside groups. These groups are open to the community and often times led by people other than congregational participants.



Congregants are often amazed at how little a building gets used. We divided your facility into “kinds” of space. The sanctuary is considered “worship” space, the fellowship hall and narthex “fellowship” space, etc. Using your church calendar, we have calculated the hours each kind of space is used and calculated the percentage of time it is utilized. This percentage is based on the space being available just 12 hours a day, 7 days a week.

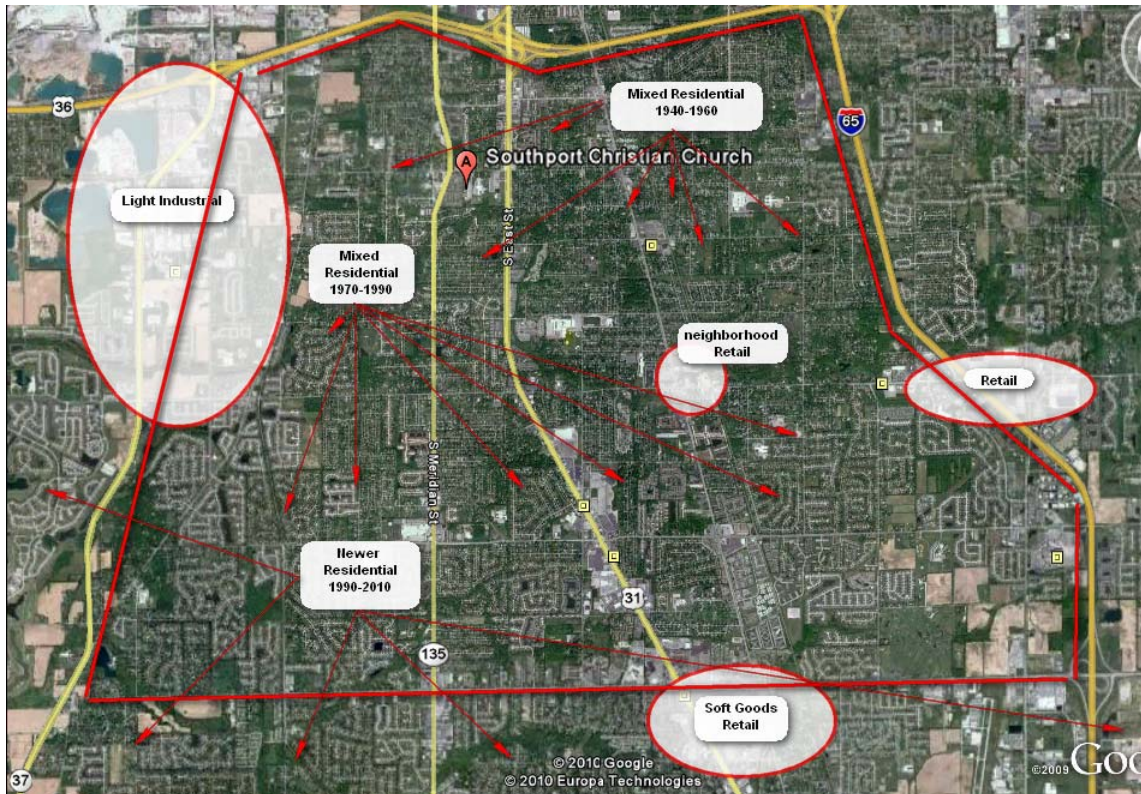


While Southport is generous with its facilities with groups outside of the church, the majority of the space sits unused during the week. The building is “right sized” for a worshipping community of Southport’s current size, however, there are opportunities for broader facility use with other non-profits during the week.

## V. THE COMMUNITY

Southport Christian Church is at the north end of an area that is bounded by the psychological boundaries of I-465, I-65 and SR 37. The church has little visibility from any major artery. While the traffic count on Epler is good, the church is set back far from the street and does not attract attention.

The psychological boundary of 465 is considerable. There is a highly notable shift in the context as one crosses it into other neighborhoods. Access to the area east of I-65 is highly limited as well and the area directly west is light industrial.



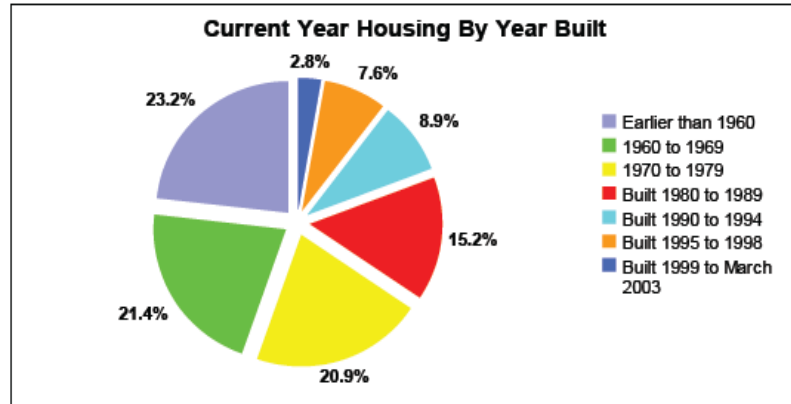
In basic terms, because of the road pattern, Southport has a limited target area with a limited population growth. Southport has been blessed to have a large number of commuters who attend worship. It should be noted however that most of these “commuters” have deep ties with the Disciples of Christ, have extended family in the church, or are former participants who have moved out of the area.

Like most major metropolitan areas, the rings of development for the Southport target area move outward from the city center. As demand for newer housing has developed, it was built further from the city. The newer housing fit the changing tastes as culture becomes more affluent.

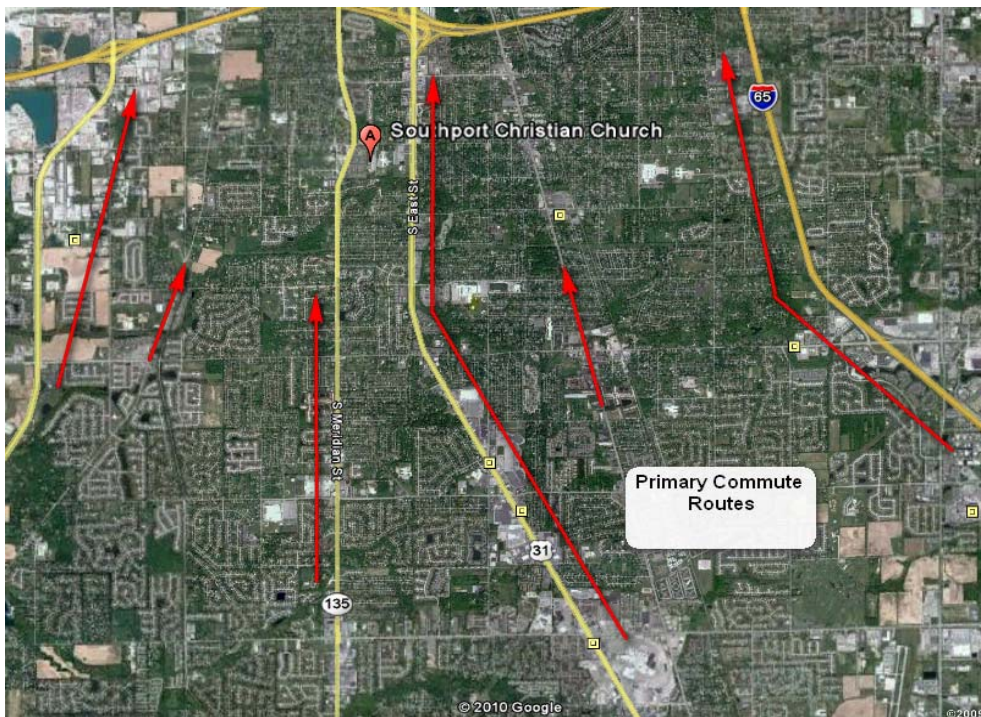
Housing in the immediate area of Southport however is in transition. Long term residents have died or moved away, and new families are making their homes here. These newer

residents in the immediate area are lower-income, predominantly white people who work in service industry or blue collar positions. Many times, an area like this will begin to show signs of gentrification; however that does not appear to be the case in this target area at this time, meaning that newer residents will fit into this socio-economic category.

There are more renters in the target area when compared to state-wide averages. This has significant impact on a congregation, and it is likely in the current economic condition to grow. Today nearly 40% of the housing in the target area is occupied by a renter.



The major traffic pattern of residents in the area is largely northward in the morning, and south in the evening. Thousands of people pass near Southport CC each day on their way to work. The primary commute routes are largely South to North (AM) utilizing the main routes displayed below. It should be noted there is little E-W travel which leaves Epler largely ignored by commuters who live south of County Line Rd.

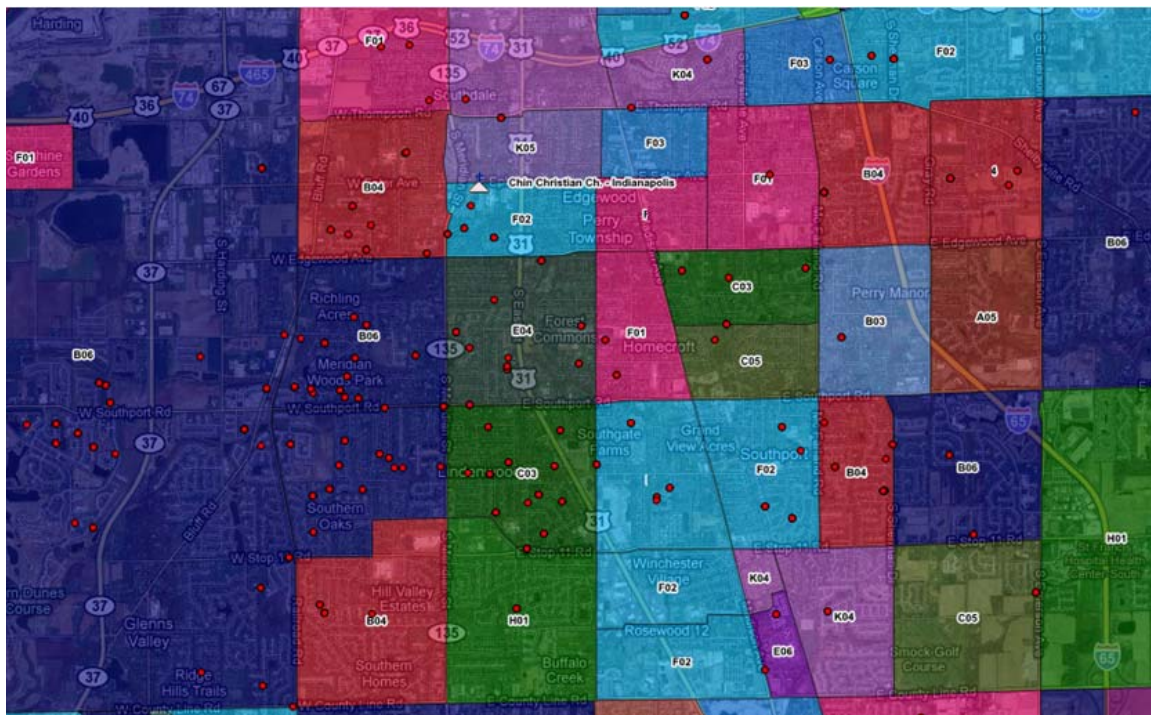


In addition to seeing basic demographics we can also identify key subcultures in the community. It is important to understand people groups or subcultures because it is

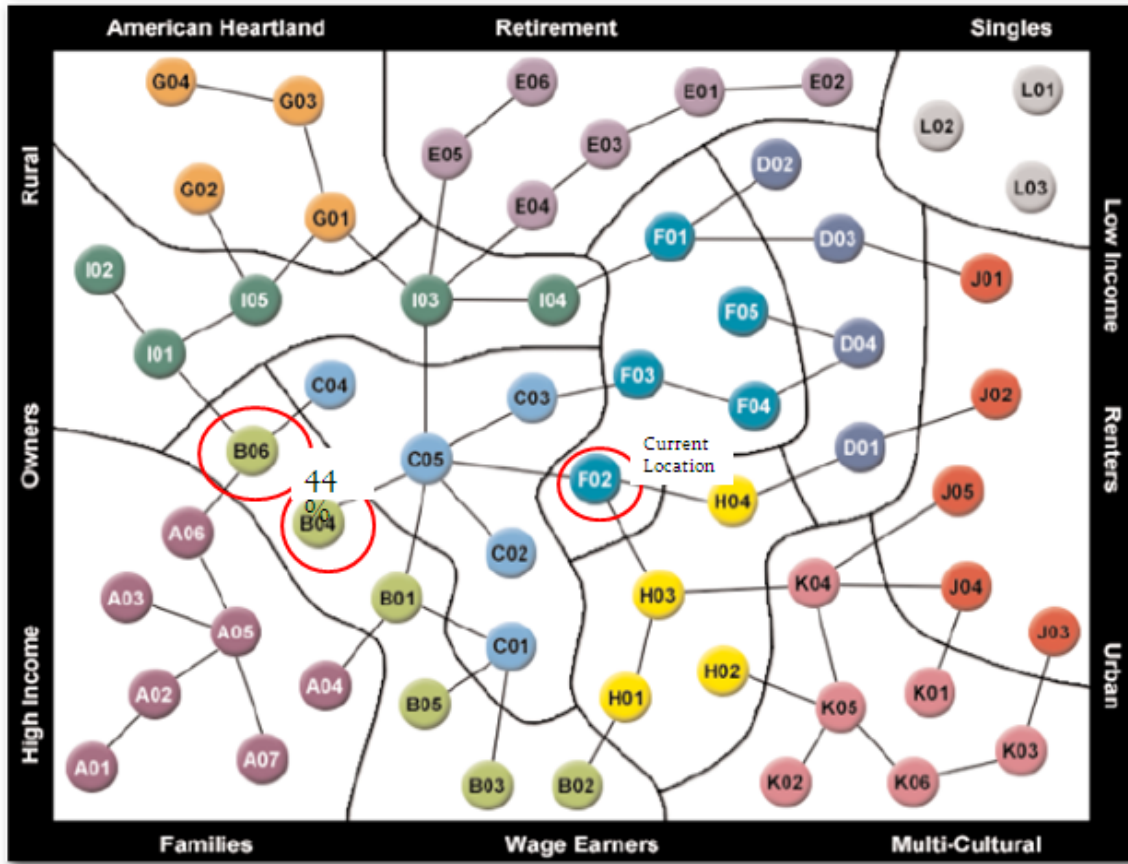
widely confirmed that the Christian faith travels easiest along existing relational ties, among people who share a similar subculture. Therefore, a congregation needs to understand the particularities of the people group(s) nearest the church and adapt its ministries for that particular people group OR relocate to another part of town. Let's examine a few more key people groups in this area.

“Mosaic” profiles are lifestyle groupings of people who share similar behaviors, social characteristics, attitudes and values. Designed by Experian (a very large credit service and data-collection company), there are 60 distinct Mosaic groups (or segments of the population) in the U.S. These groupings are based on multiple socio-economic and life-stage factors.

The map below shows where Southport participants live on the socio-economic map of the target area. It shows that while the church is located in a F-02 or “Moderate Conventionalist” area, the participants are living in significantly different areas.



Another way to demonstrate this is through a Mosaic Tree. The Mosaic tree demonstrates the interconnectedness of these distinct groups. You will note, that the tree works like a continuum with a rural flavor in the upper left hand corner, and more urban on the lower right. Families and high income are in the lower left corner, while singles and lower income is represented on the upper right.



Each Mosaic group is identified with a letter and number (e.g. A07 is “New Suburban Families” while K04 is “Urban Diversity”). Some groups have natural affinity with others because of similar characteristics, while others mix like oil and water. The chart below shows the relative closeness or distance between the 60 different lifestyle segments. While the church is located in an “F-02 area, more than 44% of the congregation resides in a B-06 or B-04 area. This means the majority of Southport’s congregation is of a fairly different socio-economic group, than those who live in the immediate target area.

***For more details and descriptions regarding each profile group, please see Appendix B at the end of this report.***

Southport is less likely to have success with the F-02 population. In fact, the index score for this particular segment is a 76, meaning that Southport is less likely to attract people from that group. (a score of 100 means proportional attraction)

When you consider the tree above, you can see that if we were to do a profile of “Southport Sam” we would see a person who is part of a family, most likely a home owner, with moderate to higher income than those who live in the immediate area. Additionally education levels are significantly different, and ways in which people handle money and the values surrounding that are significantly different.

Southport has a disproportionate ability to attract people from other groups. B-04's or the Solid Suburban Life segment scores an index score of 252, which means Southport is more than 2.5 times more likely to attract someone from that group in that community. The same is true for B-06's "successful Suburbia" in which the church attracts people 1.7 times.

	Congregant Profile	Congregant Profile %	Study Area %	Index	
	C03 SUBURBAN OPTIMISTS	16	9.20	1.30	708
	E04 SUBURBAN ADVANTAGE	11	6.30	1.40	450
	B04 SOLID SUBURBAN LIFE	21	12.10	4.80	252
	E06 MATURE AMERICA	5	2.90	1.50	193
	B06 SUCCESSFUL SUBURBIA	57	32.80	19.10	172
	A06 SMALL-TOWN SUCCESS	4	2.30	1.60	144
	C05 MID-MARKET ENTERPRISE	2	1.10	0.90	122
	A07 NEW SUBURBIA FAMILIES	7	4	4.60	87
	B03 URBAN COMMUTER FAMILIES	2	1.10	1.30	85
Church Location	F02 MODERATE CONVENTIONALISTS	19	10.90	14.40	76
	F05 GRASS-ROOTS LIVING	1	0.60	0.90	67
	K04 URBAN DIVERSITY	6	3.40	6.40	53
	F01 STEADFAST CONSERVATIVES	12	6.90	13	53
	F03 SOUTHERN BLUES	4	2.30	5.10	45
	H01 YOUNG COSMOPOLITANS	3	1.70	4.60	37
	K05 NEW GENERATION ACTIVISTS	1	0.60	2.50	24
	D04 SMALL-CITY ENDEAVORS	3	1.70	10.90	16

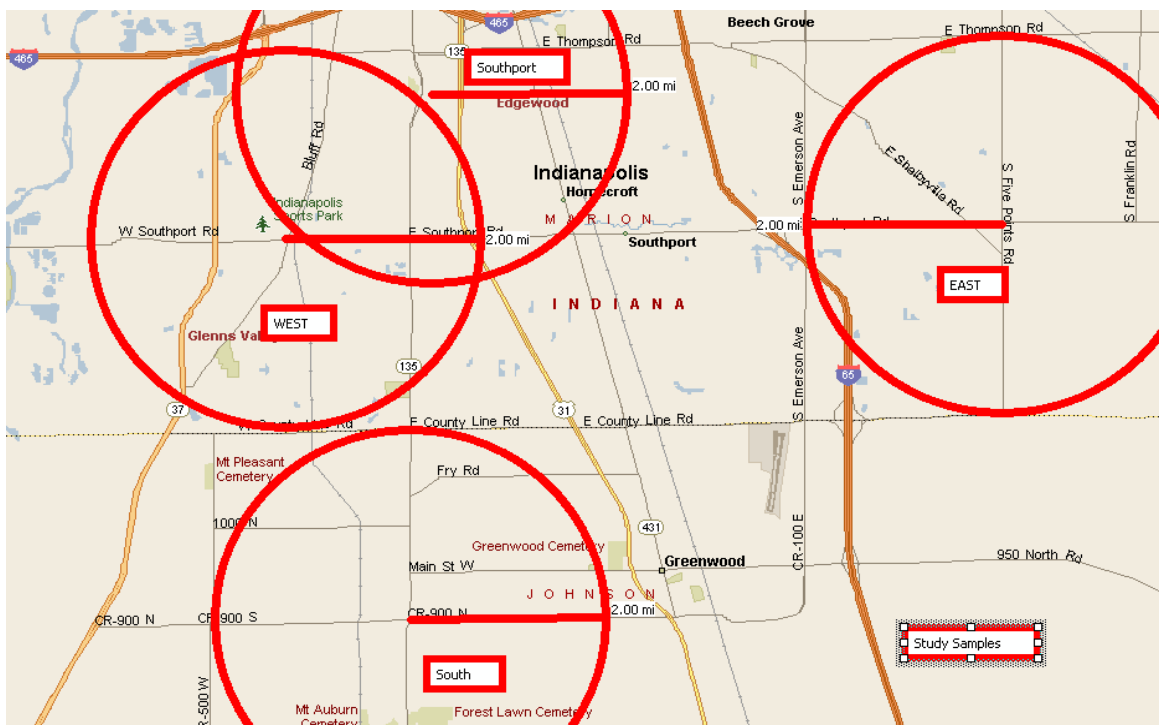
Moderate Conventionalists (F-02) are highly mobile, middle-class singles and childless couples living in modest homes or apartments in second tiered cities. They live in modest homes. Most have completed high school or some college and have good paying blue or white collar jobs mostly in the service sector. They move a lot. Their favorite activities include: dancing, bar-hopping, bowling, and playing pool. They exercise a lot and enjoy playing in recreation leagues. They carry higher debt loads than other segments.

The Successful Suburbia group, (B-06) stands in contrast to the Moderate Conventionalists group (F-02). They are middle age, married couples with children who enjoy an upscale life far from the downtown hustle of the city. They are predominantly white and college educated. They have settled for the most in upscale housing built since 1985. They have higher than average incomes from management and professional jobs in health care and manufacturing. They shop in big box stores, and love consumer electronics. They use a variety of credits cards and have investments in stocks, mutual funds and savings bonds.

As we look at the gaps between current participants, and Southport's strengths with certain groups, the church will have to deal with the question of which group it will need to target for future success.

### Adjacent Area Analysis:

As a part of the scope of this report, the consultant was asked to review several adjacent areas to determine if they had better potential for Southport's future ministry. These three areas included 2-mile radius as samples so there would be consistency in the comparisons. The three areas are defined as WEST, which would center on Southport Road and SR 37. EAST which is centered on Southport Road and 5 Points Road, and SOUTH which is centered on Smith Valley Road and 135.



While complete analysis is required for any major move, these three sample circles give us a slice of information about areas of promise.

When considering potential target areas for ministry, there are several factors to consider. In each of these considerations a weighted score is applied which compares each of the target areas with each other. If we were developing a new congregation today, both the WEST target area had the greatest potential, followed closely by the EAST target area. The SOUTH target was second while the current location rated last.

Considerations in this weighted scoring are:

- Population density
- Growth rate the past 10 years
- Projected growth rate

- Median age
- Percentage of the population over 55 years of age
- Percentage of the population enrolled in grades K-12
- Education level
- Projected household growth
- Percentage of households with 2 or less people
- Average household income
- Racial ethnic diversity
- Percentage of owner occupied housing units
- Mosaic profile matches to the current profile of Southport's participants

The raw data of this information is listed below.

	Southport	WEST	EAST	SOUTH
Number of Disciple congregations in area	1	0	0	0
Number of Southport Congregants in area	160	201	31	51
Population 2009	27386	21528	26050	30969
Growth rate (last decade)	8.47%	57.00%	70.00%	16.00%
Median Age	37	38	34	38
Average age change	1.4	2.5	3.1	3.2
55+ Percentage of Population	28.9	30	22.4	30.2
School age children percentage	17.3	16.9	21.4	18.4
Bachelor degree + (percentage)	24.7	29	29.2	35.4
Household growth (%) in past 9 years	14%	32%	109%	17%
Projected household growth (%) next 5 years	12%	55%	68%	3%
Households with 2 or less people (%)	62.7	55.2	47.1	48.9
Average Household Income (2009)	\$61,856	\$73,278	\$76,317	\$90,923
Average Household income comparative index (with Indiana)	102	117	122	145
Anglo population (%)	90.1	91.8	91.6	93.3
Owner Occupied Housing (%)	63.3	76.5	73.7	85.4
<b>MOSAIC DATA</b>				
B-06 Successful Suburbia (cong. 32.8%)	20.5	88.2	33.5	34.9
B-04 Solid Suburban Life (Cong. 12.1%)	6.8	8.8	0	0.2
F-02 Moderate Conventionalists (Cong. 10.9%)	7	0	0.1	0
TOTAL (Cong. 55.8%)	34.3	97	33.6	35.1

The West target area has a clear advantage over the Southport area in numerous categories. For example:

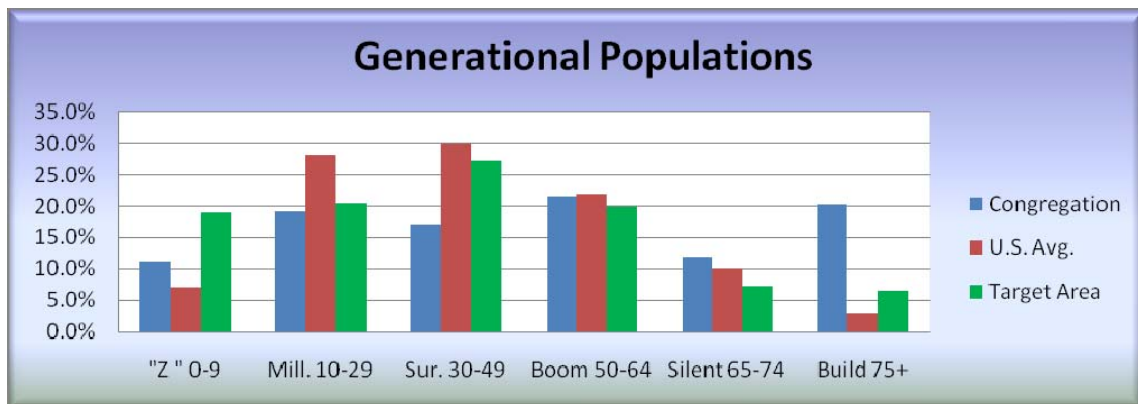
- There is a higher growth rate experienced the last decade
- There is a higher education level
- There has been significant growth in the number of households in the area
- Average household income is higher
- There is a higher percentage of home owners in the area
- There is a 97% profile match with the Mosaic profile of Southport Christian (compared to a 34% match in the current location)

## VI. THE CONGREGATION

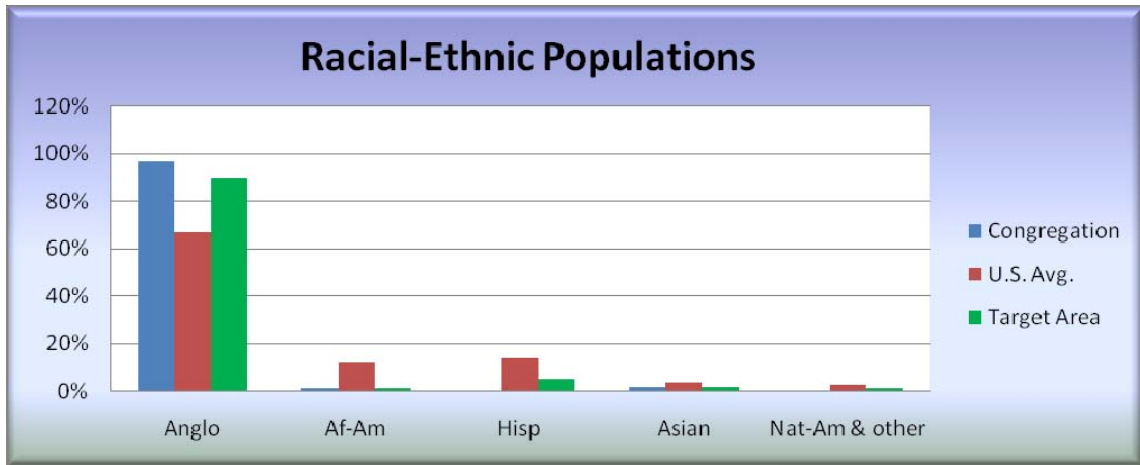
Gap analysis is a way of looking at the congregation in direct relationship with the community in which it serves. It is a way of clarifying where you are, what the needs are in that community and what opportunities for vital ministry remain as you engage that community. In this section, we compare the congregation's profile with the community profile in the previous section. We will look at where participants live in relationship to the church building. These figures help us determine the "match" you have with the community around you. Do members live where the congregation is located? If not, how does this faith community stay in touch with the needs of the neighborhood? In some cases, congregations exist in an entirely different location in the city from where their members' homes are concentrated. They have continued to decline in membership as they have attempted to "commute" into worship and serve a neighborhood from which they have grown apart.

Southport provided profile information of each participant in its congregation, which we compared with U.S. Census data from a church demographic service partner.

The first graph demonstrates the ages of participants in the congregation with the ages of those who live in the community. The blue bars show the percentage of participants in the congregation in each category. The red bar is how that compares with the total population of the United States, and the green bar is the breakdown compared to Southport's community. The data related to the red and green bar comes from the U.S. Census Bureau.

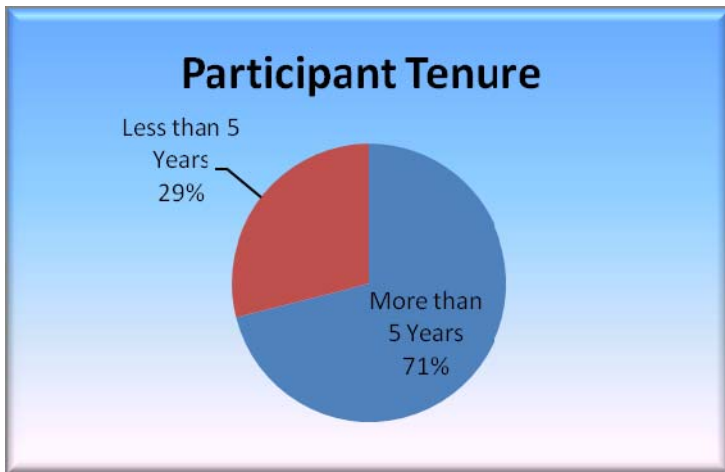


The chart shows that 53.7% of the congregation is of the Boomer generation or higher, while only 33.6% of the wider community is in that category. This single measurement is very important to the future of the congregation. While Southport shows strength in reaching younger generations, this gap is significant when compared to its community.



The chart above demonstrates the Racial/Ethnic Gaps of the congregation related to the community in which it is a part. This data also comes from the U.S. Census. *NOTE: It may severely undercount the Hispanic population in your area.*

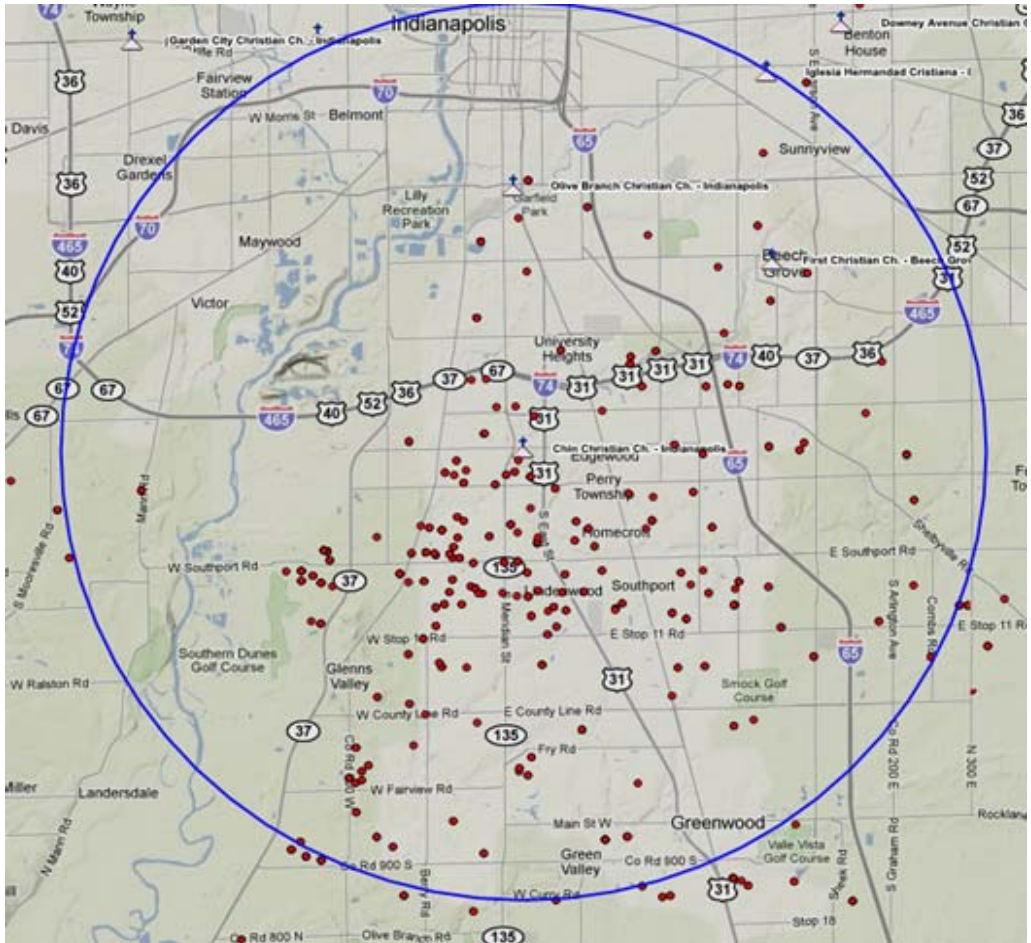
While there is a growing Hispanic population in the immediate target area, there are not significant gaps for Southport.



Another important indicator of congregational life is the tenure of its participants. While it is a good sign of stability to have long-term members, it is also important to the congregation to have new participants. New participants bring innovations, energy and a new perspective to the church. And new members help you measure the effectiveness of your efforts to reach beyond your doorsteps into your community with the Good News.

**Healthy congregations usually demonstrate a 50-50 split with participants who have been in the church five years or fewer, with those who have been there more than**

**five years.** A congregation with too many “old timers” is not likely to be very receptive to new ideas, or creativity. When compared to the mobility rate of the target area, this is the most significant gap. Southport is not reaching new residents.



Finally, we have explored the relationship of participants with the location of the church building. A pin-map has located the home of each participant with a 7-mile radius circle. You will note that few participants reside north of I-465 and that the majority are spread throughout the southern part of the city.

30% of the congregation lives more than 7 miles from the church, while only 8% live within a mile. The largest majority of participants live between 1-3 miles.

While the majority of the congregants live more than 1 mile away, there is sufficient numbers that live in the target area. In general terms we would not consider this to be a substantial gap with the area.

## VII. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Congregational finances are fairly complicated because each congregation tracks its income and expenses very differently. Congregations tend to have a lot of “restricted” funds, which can only be used for specific purposes, and which may or may not enhance the ministry of the congregation. In this review we have done our best to evaluate the financial strength of the congregation based on the norms we have observed from many congregations.

Our first area of review is to look at the congregation’s income sources. It is important to see where the income for supporting the congregation’s ministry comes from, and how much the church relies on outside sources of income.

The table below indicates the income sources for your church in relationship to congregational offerings. At the minimum, a congregation should support its expenses with at least 65 percent of its income coming from offerings. Congregations that rely too heavily on outside sources of income will often compromise their ministry for the needs of those who provide outside income.

On average, Southport donors provide the congregation with 98-99% of its total income. Southport is not overly dependent on outside sources of income or rental fees to provide for its ministry.

When we consider the expenses of the congregation, we group expenses in four main categories; Salary Support, Building and Administration, Program Expenses, and Mission Giving.

- A. Salary Support** includes salaries of all church staff and benefits associated with employing them. Such benefits would include social security offsets, health insurance, pension etc. It does not include costs such as auto expense or office reimbursements. Most congregations will expend about 50 percent of their income on salary support. Experience has shown that congregations that exceed 50 percent in this category are rarely over paying their pastor. In fact, most New Beginnings congregations fall short of average salaries for their region. (The Pension Fund of the Christian Church offers a free brochure entitled “What is a Fair Salary” at your request should the congregation wish to explore this topic in detail.) The salary amount is not too high but the percentage of the budget allotted to salaries is too high, short-changing mission, outreach and program.
  
- B. Building and Administration** costs are those associated with running the church office and the building. Typical costs include insurance, utility bills, maintenance and yard upkeep. A typical congregation will support building and administration costs with 25 percent of their income. Congregations that are not “right-sized” find themselves paying more for facilities, usually at the expense of their program.

**C. Program Expenses** are costs associated with running a program. This would include faith development, evangelism, and worship materials, choir music and supplies, advertising, and other resources and supplies that enable the program to operate. This is usually about 15 percent of a church's budget. Since this is the place where most congregations can control spending they will usually decrease their spending in this category first.

**D. Mission Giving** is giving that the congregation has contributed to both Disciples mission causes as well as local mission causes. Mission giving trends are about 10 percent of a vital congregation's budget as a starting point. Congregations will often reduce their mission spending after depleting their program spending. Many Disciples congregations, in past decades, contributed 30-50 percent of their income to mission giving.

Current Operating Budget		% of exp	% Recommended
Salary Support	\$337,788	68.92%	50.0%
Building/Admin	\$86,102	17.57%	25.0%
Program	\$14,205	2.90%	15.0%
Mission	\$52,017	10.61%	10.0%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$490,112</b>		

More than 2/3rds of Southport's budget is spent on salaries. Since other expenses are in proportion, this means fewer dollars are available for program. This factor will have significance in Southport's future ministry plan.

In addition to the sources of income, the congregation also has some investments plus the estimated value of the property. This is outlined in the table below:

Assets and Investments	
Property Value (incl. parsonage)	\$1,714,365
Investments	\$400,744
Savings/Reserve	\$0
Memorial Funds	\$0
Checking	\$5,551
Restricted Checking	\$25,517
other	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,146,177</b>

## FINANCIAL CAPACITY

In light of the financial information above, this congregation has **ABUNDANT FINANCIAL CAPACITY** for ministry. That is to say the income stream would allow the congregation to be more creative in its delivery of ministry to the community. Congregations with this type of financial picture can afford to look at new ways of outreach that most congregations cannot afford to consider.

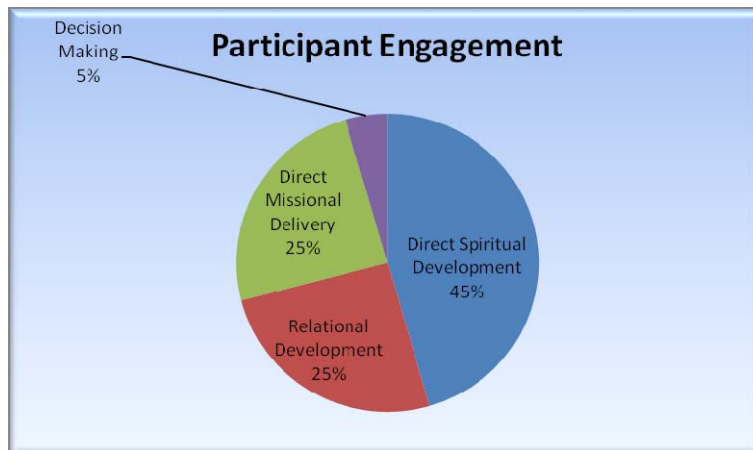
## VIII. CONGREGATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

A final area of inquiry on this report is to measure how current participants engage in the life of their congregation. This begins to ask the question about what kind of church we have.

Through interviews and a review of the church calendar, the consultant is able to measure the kinds of engagement people have with the church in four categories:

1. **Direct Spiritual Development:** These are activities in which the person involved in seeking direct growth in their spiritual life. It would include prayer groups, Bible Studies, Sunday school classes, or basically anything where more than 50% of the groups experience has a “spiritual growth” activity.
2. **Relational Development:** These are activities that enable people in the congregation to deepen their relationship with each other. While these groups have devotions and prayers, if more than 50% of the activity is related towards relationship building it falls in this category.
3. **Direct Mission Delivery:** These are activities of service to the community. It would include developing a community garden, organizing a mission trip, or a congregationally run food bank in the church.
4. **Decision Making:** These are committee meetings, and administrative groups that plan.

As you can see, these are all congregationally run activities, and do not count the efforts of outside groups that utilize the facility. This is a measurement of the kinds of activities, and the numbers of people engaged in them. This is measured by the following formula: (The number of times per year this group meets X Length of time X number of people involved.) Not included in this formula is Sunday morning worship.



Southport Christian Church demonstrates a good balance between spiritual development, and mission delivery. There are few congregations that have the missional output of Southport participants.

## **IX. MINISTRY REVIEW AND OPTIONS FOR YOUR NEW BEGINNING**

Let's review the analysis of the congregation at this point:

*History and 10-year indicators: Southport is at the end of its first lifecycle, and is in need of revising its current mission. The church has experienced a plateau over the past 10 years and is experiencing a decline in additions and baptisms. With an ageing congregation and fewer additions Southport will begin to experience decline in the near future.*

*Recap of facilities evaluation: Southport has excellent facilities that have been renovated to meet its needs. The building is the right size for the current congregation even though it could be utilized more during the week.*

*Recap of congregational gaps: Congregants represent older generational groups in a disproportionate manner when compared to the community. The congregation does not represent new residents in its tenure rates.*

*Recap of financial review: The congregation has abundant resources for ministry; however it spends more on salaries than most congregations.*

*Recap of Contextual information: Southport Christian Church is surrounded by 3 potential target areas, any one of which is superior to the current location.*

## **X. POSSIBLE FUTURE SCENARIOS**

The purpose of this report has been to name the conditions of Southport Christian Church as completely as possible so that the congregation can begin to make a decision about its future ministry opportunities.

Several options for the future of Southport have been named by the leadership of the church over the past few years. These strategies have included: 1-Relocation, 2-Mission Revision, and a third option, 3-Development of a new congregation or a satellite of the current congregation.

Let us now consider three future stories, based on the data to see what Southport's future "could" look like based on the decision the church makes today.

## **Relocation:**

April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015—Indianapolis

Southport Christian Church celebrates its first Easter service in its new facility

Several years ago, the leaders and members of Southport Christian Church noted that their congregation was getting older. “We noted that we were doing 30 funerals a year, but only baptizing 7 or 8 people” states the pastor. “The congregation was healthy in every way. It provided numerous classes that helped people grow in their faith. The church also provide 5-8 mission trips per year in which people did building projects for people who had been victims of a disaster. The church also had an active church school. But growth was hard.” He added.

As the congregation began to review its situation, they discovered that they were invisible in their community. Even though it was a healthy congregation, it was hidden on a back street where few people in the immediate area had occasion to visit. The church then began seeking a way to expand their influence by increasing their visibility. Members also realized that they would have to change their worship experiences considerably to meet the needs of the changed demographic of people who lived in the area. “We really didn’t want to change our worship service or class opportunities in the ways that were needed to remain in our same location” stated the Chair of the Deacons.

“The best way to increase our visibility was to relocate” said the chairman of the congregation. “By getting property on a visible road, next to an area that is growing with new population similar to those we’ve had success with, we felt we could expand our witness.”

In 2011, the congregation selected its new site and began plans for development. They also put their current church facility on the market while they did their building planning. “It took a long time to sell our facility. We were finally able to sell the facility for \$1.7 million to the school district. This gave us some of the capital we needed to build a new facility.” The building chairman said. They paid off their current loan, and were able to get a \$700,000 loan to complete the project.

The church realized that they could not build a facility the same size as their former church, and began to plan ways that space could be better utilized in the new facility. In addition, they planned for expanded community use of the facility so that citizens in the immediate area would feel comfortable entering their facility. They were able to build a great sanctuary with flexibility of seating, and state of the art equipment.

Today the church is a hive of activity of different community groups and social services during the week. On Sundays, the church now offers three worship services and the

congregation is growing rapidly thanks to not only increased visibility, but to being located near a socio-economic group in which the church has always had great success.

### **Mission Revision:**

November 5, 2015—Indianapolis  
Southport Christian Church celebrates Change

As a part of Southport's month of thanksgiving, the church is celebrating the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a significant change that they made in their ministry. . "We noted that we were doing 30 funerals a year, but only baptizing 7 or 8 people" states the pastor. "The congregation was healthy in every way. It provided numerous classes that helped people grow in their faith. The church also provide 5-8 mission trips per year in which people did building projects for people who had been victims of a disaster. The church also had an active church school. But growth was hard." He added.

"We knew we were a good congregation with a vital ministry, but we also could see we were not reaching our neighbors. Instead we were reaching people who lived outside of our community" said the evangelism chair. "We thought we had tried everything by adding a new sign, and sending out direct mail invitations" she added, "but then we discovered that we were inviting people to something they were not interested in."

By divine accident in 2010, the congregation had offered a Sunday worship experience that was loosely based on "A Prairie Home Companion" radio program. This experience featured a reader's theater, old hymns and blue grass music. It was a surprising success with numerous community members trying the church for the first time.

"As we looked at our visitors, we suddenly realized, this was a whole new demographic that we had not reached before." Said the head of the elders. "The people that were coming to that event didn't have a former church experience, and if they did it certainly wasn't of the nature we had offered." They also began to discover that the income and education level of the new participants was different.

"We began to shift the teaching of our classes to a level that didn't require a college education." Said the Christian Ed. Director. "We also changed the music we were offering in worship to reflect good theology, while having a little more of a catchy tune to it."

These shifts did not please everyone in the congregation. At first there was some who felt the church did not satisfy their taste in worship. "We were at a cross roads" said the Chair of the congregation. "We had to decide, do we build this church around meeting our needs? Or do we develop our ministry around the needs of the people in our community." It was a significant change.

Today, the church has many of the same programs, and worship services they offered in the past. The only difference really is in how they deliver these programs and services. Today, Southport is celebrating 60 years of ministry, and still growing.

## **A New Satellite**

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015—Indianapolis

Starting this fall, Southport Christian Church will be a church that worships in two locations. Besides offering two worship services at their current facility on Epler, they are now offering a worship experience at a new facility located near the new exit on Interstate 69 on County Line Road.

Several years ago, the leaders and members of Southport Christian Church noted that their congregation was getting older. “We noted that we were doing 30 funerals a year, but only baptizing 7 or 8 people” states the pastor. “The congregation was healthy in every way. It provided numerous classes that helped people grow in their faith. The church also provide 5-8 mission trips per year in which people did building projects for people who had been victims of a disaster. The church also had an active church school. But growth was hard.” He added.

In 2012, the congregation began to raise additional funds for building a facility that would begin to serve the rapidly growing south and west sides of their area. “We knew we had a lot of current members who live in that area, and we thought—why not build off of our strengths and open a satellite?” the pastor added.

A satellite location is a new concept for congregations. The church has only one board, one pastor, and one set of vision, mission and values—but the church meets in two locations. The pastor will preach at both churches, but lay leaders continue to teach classes at both places. An on-site associate handles the day to day operations of the satellite as well as provide pastor care for that church.

While it is one church in two places, the church will still offer the mission trips it has become famous for. The difference now is that people who worship in both locations are recruited for a wider variety of mission experiences.

“This worked better than any of us imagined” said the program committee chair. “We provide excellent worship experiences at both locations, and we now have nearly doubled the size of our congregation.” The program chair pointed to recent success by Geist Christian Church in the NW part of Indianapolis as their model.

“Having a multi-site ministry has allowed us to expand our witness, and make a difference in the lives of more people” the pastor added. It is our hope that in another 10 years this site will be sustainable at which point it will become a new church so we can develop a new satellite on the East side.”

The process was a challenge. “First, we were lucky that a church member donated the land to us so we would not have to spend money for the purchase. But raising funds for a building that not all of us would use was a challenge.” Said the chairman of finance. “Once we caught the vision of this, and rededicated ourselves towards reaching others, this vision sold itself.”

Today, Southport has nearly doubled in size, and is providing more mission trips than ever. Additionally, the church offers a wider variety of worship experiences and is now providing a witness to many new groups of people including young adults.

*Do you want to write a future story that may be a combination of those described above?*

## **XI. CONCLUSION**

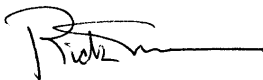
It is difficult to write a report of this nature for the church in which you attend. I have tried to remain analytical and just name the conditions of our church as the facts present themselves, and to name the sociological context of the place in which we do ministry. I can honestly say that I have no bias towards any of the 3 options listed at the end of this report, any of which will work for our future.

Southport is an amazing congregation in many ways. It has all of the earmarks of a vital and healthy congregation that is poised with great potential. It has provided opportunities for growth for people of all ages, including myself.

Southport also has a difficult location in which it is doing ministry. It is a church that needs to increase its visibility if it is going to survive into the future—whether it be by increasing visibility and changing program, or relocation or development of a satellite.

My hope is that our congregation can work together towards a new vision that will carry us the next 50 years of our life-cycle. I am certain that through prayer and wisdom, we will make the right choice.

In Christ,



*Rick P. Morse  
V.P. Mission Initiatives  
Church Extension*

## *Appendix A—Demographics*

60 pages (see separate pdf.)

## **Appendix B—Profile Information:**

Ministry Applications for Mosaic Lifestyle Portraits

### **B06: SUCCESSFUL SUBURBIA**

*Middle-age, married couples with children who enjoy an upscale life far from the downtown hustle of city living*

#### **Demographics**

The households in Successful Suburbia are located primarily in East Coast towns on the metro fringe. Predominantly white and college educated, these middle-aged couples and families have settled in upscale homes built around 1985. These homeowners earn relatively high incomes from a combination of management and professional jobs in health care, retail and manufacturing. This cluster is a haven for married couples with children who enjoy life far from the downtown hustle. They rank near the top for having multiple workers and cars to commute to jobs and entertainment.

#### **Lifestyles**

Successful Suburbia households lead busy family-oriented lifestyles. They participate in varied leisure activities, from cooking and gardening to going to aquariums, bowling alleys and theaters. Many enjoy outdoor athletic activities such as golf, soccer, baseball, football and swimming. They travel frequently for business and pleasure, though mostly to domestic beaches and ski resorts. Brand loyal shoppers, they patronize stores including Kohl's, BJ's Wholesale, Old Navy, Linens 'N Things and Best Buy. In the early childrearing phase of their lives, they buy lots of home-based consumer electronics, like desktop computers, video game systems and home theater systems, bringing everything home in their SUVs. To help finance their acquisitive nature, they carry a variety of credit cards while maintaining high levels of investments in stocks, mutual funds and U.S. savings bonds.

#### **Media**

Despite their upscale profile, the households in Successful Suburbia are a tough media sell. Other than their fondness for radio, they exhibit relatively low rates for consuming most media. They will tune in family-friendly TV sitcoms, animated shows as “The Simpsons” and cable channels including ABC Family and TBS. They subscribe to a handful of home-based magazines like Popular Mechanics, Cooking Light, American Baby and Parents. On the radio, they prefer listening to country, classic rock and golden oldies. These middle-aged family households have begun to rely on the Internet for sports news, auctions and medical information. Marketers however should be warned. These

busy consumers have little patience for advertising and declare that television commercials are annoying.

### **Reaching Out to “Successful Suburbia”**

A “balanced life” is very important to this lifestyle type, and spirituality is an important part of that life. They expect the church to help make that happen. They approach the church with reasonable reserve. They are consumers on a quest for quality, and look for relevant programs that address personal or family needs. They learn primarily through visual media and conversation. They value “common sense”, but are always suspicious that intellectual clarity might become dogmatism. Busy people, they are preoccupied with time management. They are more generous toward themselves and loved ones than toward strangers or institutions. The church is often seen as one choice among an area of service clubs and volunteer agencies.

### **Leadership: CEO**

People in this type accept pastors of either gender or different cultures, but they need to be competent administrators who manage excellent, relevant programs. The pastor should be friendly and approachable, but not presume too much on the private space and personal lives of the members. The pastor models the balanced lifestyle sought by the members, and they are suspicious about both liberal and conservative “fanaticism”. Leaders need to be fiscally responsible, morally upright, historically knowledgeable, and excellent communicators.

### **Hospitality: The Basics**

This group seeks intimacy, but they take a while to make friends. Greeters need to be effusive and warm, overcoming the shyness of seekers to guide them into new relationships in the church. They may complete guest registries, but are reluctant to share addresses and telephone numbers. Refreshments should be of the same kind and quality that they regularly consume in shopping malls and sports arenas ... but not particularly opulent in choices. “The Basics” are very good, but “radical hospitality” is considered extravagant for a church. Provide excellent websites with plenty of information about core values, beliefs, spiritual practices, staff job descriptions, and other information.

### **Worship: Inspiration and Coaching**

This group seeks both inspiration and significant conversation. Do more and better music (often, but not always in popular styles) ... and less lecturing. Provide opportunities for dialogue, question/answer, and websites or options for further investigation. They are less interested in learning eternal truths, and more interested in finding their way in daily living. They do appreciate historic terminology for Eucharist and drama in worship, and value awesome moments of silent meditation. They usually prefer worship to slow them down and provide opportunity for reflection.

### **Education: Experiential, Biblical, and Generational**

Children's education tends to be Bible-based, but more interactive. Rotational Sunday school, for example, will be more popular than static classrooms, so long as the crafts, songs, and stories are oriented to scripture. Midweek is the preferred time for adult

spiritual growth. Adults in this type tend to avoid Sunday school classes. While they wait for the children, adults tend to participate in informal groups that emphasize fellowship and topical conversation. The pastor's presence may be counter-productive and discourage conversation, but respected lay leaders (often elderly) provide more stimulation.

### **Small Groups: Designated Leaders, Affinity**

This type avoids committees and task groups in which they feel ignored, bored, or used for institutional purposes. They yearn for personal fulfillment and want to talk with mentors, experts, or professionals with deep insight into their questions and concerns. Conversation is more important than curriculum. Midweek groups are usually short term (1-5 Sessions), advertised by topic. People in this group guard their evenings very carefully, the day and time for small groups will often be very creative.

### **Outreach: Recovery, Health, Quality of Life**

Credibility for the church depends on sensitivity to strangers, outsiders, and people in need. Membership means little, but service means a great deal. These people do outreach through personal involvement on the boards and decision making of non-profit agencies, or through short term and hands-on projects in which they deal with people in need directly. Mission means acute intervention ... but these people do not have the patience or persistence for long term mission or chronic care. They are very interested in ministries that address addictions, improve health or intervene in medical crises, and improve community safety and the environment.

## ***Ministry Applications for Mosaic Lifestyle Portraits B04: SOLID SUBURBAN LIFE***

A mix of upper-middle class younger and middle-aged couples and singles who enjoy upscale comfort in maturing bedroom suburbs

### ***About "Solid Suburban Life"***

#### **Demographics**

Solid Suburban Life is a world of flagstone patios and redwood decks. Home to a mix of younger and middle-aged couples and singles, this MOSAIC features primarily white and Asian households enjoying upscale comfort in their maturing bedroom suburbs. With almost equal numbers of high school and college graduates, the adults earn upper-middle-class salaries from lucrative careers in retail, finance, health care and information services. They tend to live in well-maintained homes in inner-ring subdivisions developed in the 1970s. They accept relatively long commutes to work as the price to pay for their quiet streets and suburban lifestyles. Nearly two thirds of all families contain multiple workers, which is significantly above the national average.

#### **Lifestyles**

Solid Suburban Life households enjoy relaxed leisure lives. They enjoy going out at night

to see movies, take adult education courses or meet with friends. They like to stay in shape without joining health clubs, so they play tennis, jog, lift weights and go backpacking. These price-conscious shoppers will drive an hour in their predominantly foreign-made compact cars to snag bargain fashions at outlet stores like Nordstrom Rack, Off Fifth and Marshall's. They'll spend freely on consumer electronics and like being among the first to buy the latest portable products such as laptops, MP3 players and handheld video game devices. Declaring they care less about saving money than saving for a rainy day, these households like to have fun by taking vacations on cruise ships and at ski resorts.

### **Media**

When it comes to media, the members of Solid Suburban Life have youthful sensibilities. They like watching network reality shows, primetime comedies and late-night talk shows as well as cable channels such as MTV, FX, Spike TV and Comedy Central. Their favorite magazines include celebrity weeklies like People, Star and Entertainment Weekly as well as fashion and parenting magazines. On their daily commutes to work, their car radios are tuned into contemporary hits. Once they're home, they lead active virtual lives, going online to bank, shop and look for better jobs.

### ***Reaching out to "Solid Suburban Life"***

Spirituality and the church are both important to this lifestyle type. Their interest in the former continues to grow, making religion very personal; but their interest in church has become more cautious. They appreciate the core values, religious symbols, ancient heritage, and centrality of Christ; but they are skeptical of organizational mismanagement, high overhead cost for property and personnel, and extreme public policy statements (liberal or conservative). They tend to be very pragmatic when it comes to church, choosing to participate wherever the programs are most relevant to their family needs at the moment. They gravitate to churches with larger resources.

### **Leadership: Visionary, Discipler**

While this church expects specialized staff to manage excellent and relevant programs, they expect the senior pastor to rise above management. The pastor must cast a simple, clear, bold vision to bless others (not simply honor tradition or defend theology). The pastor's ability to motivate and equip volunteers is crucial. They want the pastor to be a model of good discipleship, and skilled in guiding others to mature in their faith. The pastor's credibility does not depend on denominational loyalty or political correctness, but on their ability to grow a seeker into a minister.

### **Hospitality: Multiple Choices**

If the pastor is credible, and the programs relevant, people in this lifestyle type will be remarkably regular in worship. They often come early; step in and out of worship; and linger afterwards to connect with small groups and good friends. Provide refreshments throughout the morning the equivalent in choice and quality to the best coffee house in town. The environment should include round tables and chairs, technology, ambient music, and shopping (i.e. books, CD's, DVD's, devotional objects, and apparel with the

logo of the church). Train hosts and hostesses to be comfortable talking about Christ, faith, and mission. Staff should intentionally make themselves available for spontaneous conversation.

### **Worship: Coaching, Inspiration**

People in this group often *say* they like “traditional” worship, but what they assume to be “traditional” is really not what their parents or grandparents did. Worship tends to be informal, within a larger structure that makes both theological and emotional sense. In other words, the basic components of classic liturgy are present, but it intentionally uses music and images to slow down or speed up emotional reactions. What seems like “meaningful entertainment” to some is more reminiscent of the carefully crafted revivals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that their *great*-grandparents enjoyed. Worship may include Eucharist, but make it less wordy and more dramatic. The message should be very practical and focus on applied Christianity: “how to be a Christian” in diverse circumstances at home, work, play, etc.

### **Education: Experiential, Biblical**

Education is important to this lifestyle type, and they generally assume that faith is a matter of the mind rather than the heart. Sunday school should teach basic Bible stories and passages, but also Biblical interpretation, doctrine, and practical church participation. Sunday school may be organized in generational classes or as affinity groups, but the more experiential the methodology the better. These people like children to learn through activities. Youth groups tend to be oriented around Bible study and mission projects ... but using the latest technologies and carefully guided by adult counselors. Adult Sunday school works for this lifestyle type, and adults will learn through classroom settings, curriculum, lecture, and discussion.

### **Small Groups: Designated Leaders**

Both curriculum based groups and affinity based groups will work for this type, but there must be well trained designated leaders. These well-organized people can participate in quite elaborate systems of personal growth and faith formation that guide people from “beginner” to “advanced” stages of commitment. Almost anything can be used as an affinity to bring people together, and then overlay prayer, Bible talk, and guided intimacy. However, people in this type will resist straying too far from their comfort zones, or committing too much time to any single thing.

### **Outreach: Health, Human Potential, Interpersonal Relationships**

People in this type tend to resist committees and task groups, and prefer to serve from a sense of passion or calling. They like to work in teams, so that there is a *personal* benefit to serving (fellowship, prayer support, personal growth) as well as a practical result that *blesses* seekers. They usually see the intrinsic connection between doing good and sharing faith motivation, but require training to do both well. Their primary passions usually involve addressing holistic health issues, educational ministries, and improving any kind of intimate relationship. This last interest may lead to specific recovery or 12

step ministries, but they prefer to create these programs themselves, within their own values and beliefs systems, than lean on outside non-profit organizations.

## ***F02: MODERATE CONVENTIONALISTS***

Highly mobile, middle-class singles and childless couples living in modest homes, semi-detached houses and apartments scattered throughout second-tier cities

### ***About “Moderate Conventionalists”***

#### **Demographics**

With many key demographic measures close to the national average—including age, income and education—members of Moderate Conventionalists epitomize average Americans. Scattered throughout second-tier cities in the Midwest and West Coast, these singles and couples tend to live in modest homes, semi-detached houses and apartments. Most have completed high school or some college and parlayed well-paying blue-collar and white-collar jobs into middle-class status. These predominantly childless households have low rates of home ownership and above-average rates of mobility. Moving vans are a frequent sight in this cluster, as young singles move into their first apartments and empty-nesting couples leave their homes for smaller retirement rentals.

#### **Lifestyles**

Members of Moderate Conventionalists lead active social lives. With the majority of residents unattached, these areas present an active social scene. Their favorite activities include dancing, bar hopping, bowling and playing pool. They’re avid exercise buffs who like to play softball, tennis and volleyball. They travel frequently for business and pleasure, though their destinations are frequently to ocean beaches. They’re big consumers for products that help them look their best such as cosmetics, toiletries and athletic gear. With their mid-scale incomes, these childless households have discretionary cash to spend on clothes and the latest tech gear. However, they can’t be too extravagant since many are carrying plenty of debt with education and car loans.

#### **Media**

Despite all their socializing, Moderate Conventionalists find time to enjoy a variety of media— from newspapers and TV to movies and the Internet. They like to watch reality shows, sitcoms and evening animation such as “CSI,” “King of the Hill,” “E.R.” and “Malcolm in the Middle.” They read a lot of gaming, celebrity and sports magazines, such as Entertainment Weekly, Us, Sports Illustrated and GamePro. This is only a moderate market for radio programming, with country music and contemporary hit radio stations faring the best. Many of the young residents would rather spend their free time on the Internet, downloading games, looking for better jobs, surfing to sports websites and participating in chat forums.

### ***Reaching out to “Moderate Conventionalists”***

At one time, the old vaudeville adage applied to this lifestyle type: "If you can play it in Peoria (Illinois), you can play it anywhere." People in this type were (and to some extent still are) strong supporters of established, traditional churches. Today they are increasingly mobile, however, and have become consummate church shoppers. They may connect with more than one church at any given time, and the church they go to now may not be the same denomination as the one they left. Local congregational vision and personal fit are crucial. Many will connect with large churches with relatively low expectations in which they can participate anonymously. Some will connect with mid-sized family churches where they can quickly make friends and network into the wider community. They tend to avoid very small churches.

#### **Leadership: Mentor, Discipler**

This group expects the pastor to be a Biblical teacher, but not an advocate or prophet for social issues. The pastor makes it a priority to connect with members 1:1 for the specific purpose of taking them deeper into faith and helping them align their lives with God's purpose. If it is a large church, then the pastor is expected to train a cadre of small group leaders or other mentors with whom people in this type can connect. Personal and spiritual growth is continued through the internet, and the pastor must be able to communicate effectively through blogging and email, as well as through preaching and personal conversation. The pastor must be approachable and a good listener, and is usually very flexible in customizing baptisms, weddings, funerals, and other rituals to the unique needs of individuals.

#### **Hospitality: The Basics, Multiple Choices**

This group will value friendly conversation and fellowship, and may be scared away if the greeting is too effusive or the conversation gets very deep too quickly. Since they are very mobile, they are more cautious about making long term commitments or sinking deep roots in the community. Refreshments can be simple and homemade ... outdoor barbecues being a favorite. They would rather talk with the pastor through internet chat rooms than face to face, and after worship they may shake hands briefly, or exit from a side door. Home visits are probably discouraged, and they need to connect with lay leaders socially before they can connect with them spiritually.

#### **Worship: Educational, Care Giving, Inspirational**

This group is “middle of the road” in every way, and appreciates blended worship that is modestly formal and music that is modestly contemporary. They appreciate country rhythms and praise music. The sacraments may well be a puzzling ritual, and they may stay away from worship when sacraments are on the schedule. Because they do not have children, they are less interested in “family worship” styles with children’s stories, announcement times, and spontaneity. Worship will need to fit into their sports schedules, and they may disappear during the playoffs.

**Education: Experiential, Topical, Peer Group**

Since few in this type have children, Sunday school is not of high importance. They will prioritize sports participation over Christian education for themselves, but may appreciate devotional and other spiritual material that they can use at home or on vacation. Bible reading and everyday language translations are valued, but not rigorous Bible study.

**Small Groups: Designated Leaders, Affinity**

People in this group will participate in more complex small group multiplication programs ... but are less likely to volunteer as small group leaders because they move so often. They will accept the intentional closure of a small group if there is individual mentoring that moves them along to the next step in personal or spiritual growth. Affinities related to sports will be especially attractive to this group. Sports affinities may be real or virtual, and may involve participation or observation. This type can enjoy “tailgate” parties at major sports venues.

**Outreach: Quality of Life, Human Potential**

It takes a lot to motivate this lifestyle type into active mission ... usually a major natural disaster. Many volunteer for short term mission teams to disaster areas, but do not tend to repeat the experience often. People in this group look for opportunities to improve quality of life or personal success. Gifts discernment, personality typing, career counseling, addiction intervention, human rights, and environmental recovery are all topics of interest.