

Church Profile Form Completion Guide

Plymouth Heights CRC - Based on Congregational Survey Analysis

Purpose: This guide provides data-driven recommendations for completing each section of the church profile form based on the congregational survey responses.

How to use: Each section below corresponds to a section in the church profile form. We provide recommended responses, supporting data, and notes about areas requiring leadership discernment.

Church Information

Community Setting

Growth Status: Growing Static **Declining**

Data Support: - Multiple respondents noted “aging congregation” and “younger generation moving away”
- 29% identified age gaps as concern - 69% cited youth retention as top challenge

Note: While spiritually vital, numerically the trajectory is concerning without intervention.

Location Type: Suburban

Function: Bedroom Community

Approximate Population: [Committee to fill - Grand Rapids metro area context]

Church Profile

Pastoral Position

Pastor Gender: Male and Female pastors

Data Support: - No survey questions directly asked this - Current presence of Pastor Sarah (female) without objection in responses - Some respondents used “he/she” language when describing desired pastor - Committee should confirm no strong objections exist

Position Details

General Position Description:

Full-time Minister of Worship and Leadership responsible for biblical preaching and teaching, pastoral care, vision casting, staff leadership, and community engagement. The pastor will work collaboratively with lay leadership to equip disciples for ministry, foster a sense of belonging across generations, and guide the congregation in living out its mission to serve neighbors and invite them into discipleship.

Employment Type: Full-time

Bi-vocational Position? Yes No

Years of Ministry Experience Preferred: Recommended: 5-10 years minimum

Rationale: - Need for proven preaching ability - Staff leadership complexity - Navigating congregational tensions requires maturity - But: openness to “youngish and energetic” mentioned by some

Church Demographics

Note: Survey did not collect specific demographic percentages. Committee must gather this data from church records. Survey provides qualitative insights below:

Age Distribution of Congregation

Survey Insights: - **Observation:** “Noticeable age gaps” (29% of respondents) - **Specific gap:** “It’s the middle ages we are missing - parents of teenagers” - **Concern:** “Aging congregation” mentioned multiple times - **Weekly attendance:** Predominantly older members and young families (middle age gap)

Recommendation: Committee should analyze actual membership data to provide percentages, but acknowledge in narrative that youth retention and middle-age participation are recognized challenges.

Membership Tenure

Survey Insight: - Mix of long-time members (references to “forefathers heritage”) - Several identified as “recently new member (1 year)” - Small groups include both established and newer participants

Recommendation: Analyze membership records for actual percentages, but note healthy mix of tenure levels.

Worship & Discipleship

Worship Participation

How are members involved in planning and participation in the liturgy/worship?

Recommended Response:

A Worship Coordinator works diligently to plan weekly worship services, incorporating input from pastoral staff and musicians. Members participate in worship through:

- Scripture reading
- Leading prayers
- Children's messages
- Musical participation (instruments, praise team, occasional choirs)
- Sound and streaming tech team
- Occasional lay-led elements

Current involvement level is viewed as appropriate by 65% of congregation (survey data: mean 2.82 on 1-5 scale where 3 = appropriate). Members express openness to expanded participation opportunities if interest exists, particularly through:

- Sign-up sheets for various worship roles
- Adult choir (requested by multiple members)
- Training for worship leaders
- More congregational singing engagement

Worship Services

Describe the worship services in your church:

Recommended Response:

Plymouth Heights offers Sunday morning worship services that blend traditional Reformed liturgical structure with contemporary elements. Our services feature:

LITURGICAL ELEMENTS:

- Traditional Reformed liturgy (Call to Worship, Call to Confession, Assurance of Pardon, etc.)
- Communion regularly celebrated
- Congregational responsive readings
- Children's messages

MUSIC STYLE:

- Blended approach: 54% of congregation prefers balanced traditional/contemporary mix (survey: mean 2.91 on 1-5 scale, where 3 = balanced)
- Instruments include organ, piano, guitars, drums, brass, and other instruments
- Mix of hymns and contemporary Christian songs
- Music leadership by Director of Music Ministries
- Occasional special music (solos, duets, instrumental pieces)

PREACHING:

- Biblical, gospel-centered exposition
- Relevant to daily life
- Use of technology (screens, PowerPoint) to enhance teaching
- Typically 25-30 minute sermons

PARTICIPATION:

- Multigenerational involvement (children, youth, adults)
- "Meet and greet" time during service
- Fellowship time after service (coffee/conversation)

ATMOSPHERE:

- Described by members as: "authentic," "welcoming," "theologically sound," "variety," "participatory"
- Balance of reverence and warmth

Members particularly appreciate: biblical preaching (mentioned by 35%), musical variety (mentioned by 44 times), liturgical depth, and intergenerational presence.

Discipleship Practices

Describe the discipleship practices in your church for all ages:

Recommended Response:

ADULT DISCIPLESHIP:

- Small Groups: "Equip Group" and "Oasis Group" (25 participants in survey)
- Bible Studies: Men's Group, Women's Bible Study (26 participants)
- Various book clubs and topical studies
- Mentoring opportunities

CHILDREN & YOUTH:

- GEMS (Girls) and Cadets (Boys) programs
- Dwell youth program
- Children's worship and messages during services
- Summer programs (Strings 'n Things music program)
- Many participants from both church families and community

INTERGENERATIONAL:

- Community Nights (24 survey participants) - summer parking lot events
- Family-focused worship services
- Friendship Group (7 participants) - serving those with diverse abilities
- Fellowship meals and gatherings

COMMUNITY SERVICE:

- Mobile Food Pantry (12 participants)
- Mentoring at Mulick Park Elementary
- Family Promise involvement

AREAS FOR GROWTH (per survey feedback):

Members desire expanded offerings including:

- Pastor-led adult Bible studies
- Evening services or hymn sings
- Adult Sunday School
- Youth mission trips
- College student outreach (nearby Calvin University)
- More regular fellowship meals
- Summer music camp for children

Current participation is strong among committed members, with 88% involved in at least one ministry beyond Sunday worship. Challenge is engaging those who attend Sunday only and integrating new members into discipleship opportunities.

Building & Financial Information

Note: Survey did not address financial/facility questions. Committee must complete from church records. However, survey provided relevant context:

Related Survey Insights:

Facilities mentioned: - Parking lot used effectively for community events - Building adequate for current ministries - Requests for: pickleball courts, basketball courts, outdoor activity spaces - Questions about potential daycare ministry space

Financial stewardship noted: - “Membership Financial Support” cited as strength - “Amount contributed above budget and ministry shares” practice exists - No complaints about financial constraints in survey

Church Characteristics

Ministry Focus

The FOCUS OF OUR CHURCH’S MINISTRY is:

Recommended Selection: Community exclusively | Community primarily | **Equally** | Current members primarily | Current members exclusively

Data Support: - Mission statement emphasizes BOTH equipping disciples AND inviting neighbors - Strong internal ministries (small groups, Bible studies) AND external focus (food pantry, community nights, GEMS/Cadets) - Survey showed 47% cite “community presence” as top strength - But also strong emphasis on member care, belonging, discipleship - Balance rating: mean 3.46/5 for local/global balance

Note: Slight lean toward “Current members primarily” could be argued given emphasis on belonging and member integration, but mission statement and actual programming support “equally.”

Worship Service Design

The WORSHIP SERVICE IS DESIGNED FOR:

Recommended Selection: Unchurched | Emphasis unchurched | Unchurched & believers | **Emphasis on believers** | Believers exclusively

Data Support: - Traditional Reformed liturgy may be less accessible to completely unchurched - Catechism, confessions, liturgical language assumes some Christian background - BUT: Children’s messages, contemporary music, use of screens make it somewhat accessible - Community outreach suggests openness to newcomers - Not “believers exclusively” because of welcoming posture and mission to “invite neighbors”

Music Style

The STYLE OF MUSIC used in the worship service is:

Recommended Selection: Contemporary | Mostly contemporary | **Blended** | Mostly traditional | Traditional

Data Support: - **Clear survey data:** Mean preference = 2.91 (where 3 = blended) - **54% of respondents chose “3” (balanced)** - Current practice includes: organ, piano, guitars, drums, hymns, contemporary songs - Multiple comments praised the “variety” and “mix” - 25% prefer slightly more traditional (rating of 2) - 19% prefer slightly more contemporary (rating of 4) - Zero respondents wanted fully contemporary (5)

Leadership Structure

LEADERSHIP is generally provided by:

Recommended Selection: Predominantly lay leaders | Frequently lay leaders | **Lay leaders & pastoral staff share leadership** | Lay function under pastoral | Predominantly pastoral

Data Support: - Survey responses favored “balanced approach” with collaboration - “Pastoral staff should work with lay leaders but show leadership capabilities” - “Council chair should be an elected elder” - Active council, deacons, and ministry committees - But also: “We desperately need leadership” (from pastor) - Not heavy-handed pastoral authority, but also not purely lay-driven

Spiritual Growth Encouragement

We seek to ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL GROWTH through:

Recommended Selection: No specific ministries | Ministries for few groups | Ministries for selected groups | **Ministries for most groups** | Ministries for all groups

Data Support: - Adult ministries: multiple small groups, Bible studies, gender-specific groups - Youth: GEMS, Cadets, Dwell - Special needs: Friendship Group - Community: various outreach programs - BUT: gaps acknowledged (college-age, young professionals, middle-age parents) - Not “all groups” because of acknowledged gaps - Strong offerings but room for expansion

Evangelism Strategies

EVANGELISM STRATEGIES AND METHODS are:

Recommended Selection: Predominantly unplanned | Generally unplanned | **Equal emphasis** | Generally planned | Predominantly planned

Data Support: - **Planned:** Food pantry, Community Nights, GEMS/Cadets outreach are structured programs - **Unplanned:** Also emphasis on personal relationships, organic neighborhood connections - Survey showed desire for more “personal evangelism training” (suggesting less structured) - Mission statement emphasizes both institutional (“equipping disciples”) and organic (“become neighbors”) - Members want balance of programs and authentic relationships

Note: Could argue for “Generally planned” given structured programs, but personal/relational emphasis balances it.

Economic Diversity Representation

Our church is representative of the ECONOMIC DIVERSITY of our community:

Recommended Selection: Strongly representative | Mostly representative | **Moderately representative** | Mildly representative | Weakly representative

Data Support: - Food pantry serves lower-income neighbors - Friendship Group includes diverse economic situations - Grand Rapids SE side has economic diversity - BUT: Survey respondents seem predominantly middle-class (based on language, concerns) - No specific discussion of economic diversity in responses - Not a stated strength or concern

Committee Decision Needed: Requires honest assessment of actual membership economic profile vs. community profile.

Ethnic Diversity Representation

Our church is representative of the ETHNIC DIVERSITY of our community:

Recommended Selection: Strongly representative | Mostly representative | **Moderately representative** | Mildly representative | Weakly representative

Data Support: - Survey responses noted “international presence in the church” - “Value for diversity” cited by 44% as church strength - Some noted “people of different ethnic backgrounds” in worship - BUT: Also noted “creating a welcoming space for more diverse populations outside of white community” as challenge - Desire for “expanding diversity” as future goal - Southeast GR has significant ethnic diversity that church only partially reflects

Alternative Case for “Mildly representative”: - If honest assessment shows congregation predominantly white in ethnically diverse neighborhood - Survey showed some awareness that diversity is more aspirational than actual

Committee must decide based on actual demographics.

Response to Compassion, Mercy, and Justice Needs

Our church’s RESPONSE TO COMPASSION, MERCY, AND JUSTICE NEEDS is:

Recommended Selection: Commitment to church-based | Encouragement of church-based | **Church-based & personal action** | Encouragement of personal | Commitment to personal

Data Support: - **Church-based:** Food pantry, benevolence, Friendship Group, Family Promise - **Personal:** Elders/deacons visit individuals, members serve in various community contexts - Survey showed appreciation for both structured programs and individual pastoral care - Some desire for “more personal engagement beyond donations” - Balance between institutional response and equipping members

Missional Focus

Our church’s MISSIONAL FOCUS is:

Recommended Selection: All local | Mostly local | **Equally local and global** | Mostly global | All global

Data Support: - **Local:** Food pantry, community nights, neighborhood schools, local justice issues - **Global:** Support for 6 missionaries (mentioned in survey), denominational missions - Survey question on balance: Mean = 3.46/5 (where 3 = balanced, 5 = totally balanced) - 51% rated balance as “3” and 40% rated it as “4-5” = satisfaction with current balance - Some requests for more missionary communication/education

Narrative Responses

Ecumenical Activities

In what ways does your church participate in ecumenical activities?

Recommended Response:

Plymouth Heights participates in ecumenical activities through:

LOCAL COLLABORATION:

- Multi-church support of Mobile Food Pantry
- Partnership with other churches for programs like GEMS and Cadets
- Occasional shared community events
- Family Promise partnership (when active)

DENOMINATIONAL CONNECTION:

- Active member of Christian Reformed Church denomination
- Participation in classis activities
- Support of denominational missions and ministry shares

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Mentoring partnership with Mulick Park Elementary School
- Collaboration with International Friendship Inc. (IFI) for international student ministry
- Neighborhood presence through community nights and outreach

AREAS FOR GROWTH:

Survey responses indicated interest in:

- Greater connection with other CRC churches in Grand Rapids that remained in denomination
- Potential collaboration/consolidation discussions
- More visible ecumenical justice initiatives
- Shared youth programming possibilities

The congregation values both its distinct Reformed identity and collaborative engagement with the broader church and community.

Church Strengths & Gifts

Reflect on your strengths/gifts as a church:

Recommended Response:

Based on congregational input, Plymouth Heights' greatest strengths include:

1. WORSHIP SERVICES (68% of respondents cited)
 - Biblical, gospel-centered preaching
 - Blended music style with variety of instruments
 - Traditional Reformed liturgy with contemporary accessibility
 - Multigenerational participation
 - Use of technology to enhance teaching
2. COMMUNITY PRESENCE (47%)
 - Known and respected in Southeast Grand Rapids neighborhood
 - Active food pantry serving real needs
 - Summer community nights welcoming all
 - Partnership with local schools
 - Reputation for hospitality and service
3. YOUTH PROGRAM MINISTRIES (46%)
 - GEMS and Cadets programs drawing both church and community youth
 - Dwell youth programming
 - Children's worship and messages
 - Music programs (Strings 'n Things)
 - Engagement with families
4. VALUE FOR DIVERSITY (44%)
 - Welcoming spirit toward people of varied backgrounds
 - Friendship Group serving those with diverse abilities
 - Multigenerational congregation
 - International members present
 - Appreciation for different worship style preferences
5. LEADERSHIP (29%)
 - Committed council, elders, and deacons
 - Strong pastoral support structure
 - Active committees and volunteers
 - Collaborative approach between lay and staff
6. SMALL GROUP CULTURE
 - Multiple Bible studies and small groups
 - 75%+ of engaged members in at least one group
 - Variety of entry points (gender-specific, topical, service-oriented)
7. MISSIONAL COMMITMENT
 - Clear mission statement lived out through programs
 - Balance of discipleship and evangelism
 - Financial generosity (contributions above budget/shares)
 - Support of global missions (6 missionaries)

8. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

- Reformed theological grounding
- Appreciation for catechism, confessions, creeds
- Gospel-centered teaching
- World-and-life view perspective

SUMMARY: Plymouth Heights is a theologically grounded, missionally engaged, worship-centered congregation with strong community presence and commitment to both discipleship and service.

Church Passions

Reflect on your passions as a church:

Recommended Response:

The Plymouth Heights congregation demonstrates passion for:

1. BIBLICAL PREACHING & TEACHING

- "Exceptional preaching" cited more than any other priority
- Desire for "thought-provoking, relevant sermons"
- Reformed theology matters deeply
- Connecting Scripture to daily life

2. NEXT GENERATION MINISTRY

- 69% identified youth retention as most pressing cultural challenge
- Strong desire to attract and keep young families
- Investment in children's and youth programming
- Concern for church's future sustainability

3. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY & BELONGING

- "Fostering belonging" top priority for new pastor (31% mentioned)
- Value for genuine relationships over mere programs
- Desire for meals together, hospitality, fellowship
- Integration of new members matters

4. NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

- Living out mission to "become neighbors"
- Food pantry as expression of Christ's love
- Desire to be known and present in community
- Not just inviting in, but going out

5. GOSPEL-CENTERED UNITY

- Passion to maintain unity amid denominational tensions
- Desire to "live peaceably in diverse culture"
- Core gospel matters more than peripheral issues
- Grace and truth held together

6. JOYFUL WORSHIP

- Music matters - variety, enthusiasm, participation
- Desire for worship that touches hearts and engages minds
- "Happy place" where God's presence is encountered
- Multigenerational participation

7. REFORMED IDENTITY

- "Christians of Reformed accent" matters
- Doctrinal foundations valued
- But not rigid - "reformed and reforming"
- Intellectual rigor with warm hearts

SUMMARY: We are passionate about the gospel proclaimed through excellent preaching, lived out in authentic community, expressed in service to neighbors, and passed on to the next generation - all grounded in our Reformed heritage.

Congregational Struggles

List specific problems with which your congregation struggles:

Recommended Response (be honest):

Plymouth Heights acknowledges these significant challenges:

1. YOUTH RETENTION & YOUNG FAMILY ATTRACTION (Most Critical)

- Aging congregation with younger generation moving away
- Middle-age gap: "parents of teenagers" demographic missing
- 69% of survey respondents identified this as top cultural challenge
- Need to make church compelling for 20s-40s age group
- Risk of "aging out" if not addressed

2. BELONGING VS. WELCOMING GAP

- 29% observe that we "welcome warmly but new members don't feel they belong"
- Easier to invite people than to integrate them
- Possible insider/outsider dynamics
- Need clearer pathways to involvement and community

3. DENOMINATIONAL TENSIONS

- Mixed feelings about CRC relationship
- Human sexuality positions create internal disagreement
- Some feel synodical decisions are divisive
- Challenge to maintain unity while holding convictions
- Range from very supportive to very critical of denomination

4. STAFF DYNAMICS & PASTORAL TURNOVER

- Recent pastoral transition (Pastor Ben's departure)
- Need for "getting along with staff" mentioned by multiple respondents
- Desire for long-term committed pastoral leadership
- Some uncertainty about expectations and roles

5. COMPETING PRIORITIES & BUSY LIVES

- 59% identified this as cultural challenge
- Difficulty getting volunteers for all ministries
- Some members only able to attend Sunday worship
- Balance between doing more and burning out volunteers

6. BRIDGING GENERATIONAL DIVIDES

- Age gaps create different priorities and preferences
- Music style preferences vary by generation
- Programs that appeal to one age group may not reach another

- Need for both/and rather than either/or thinking
7. CLARITY OF IDENTITY & DIRECTION
 - Questions raised: "Do we want to grow?"
 - "What is our mission now?"
 - Need to establish clear direction for future
 - Balance between maintaining current members and reaching new ones
 8. DIVERSITY ASPIRATIONS VS. REALITY
 - 44% value diversity, but 16% acknowledge struggle with it
 - Desire to be more representative of community's ethnic/economic diversity
 - "Creating welcoming space for more diverse populations outside white community"
 - Gap between aspiration and achievement
 9. RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS
 - "Unless our numbers grow, we won't have people power to expand"
 - Can't do everything well with limited volunteers
 - Need to prioritize quality over quantity of programs
 10. CULTURAL NAVIGATION
 - Gender identification and non-traditional relationships (19% cited)
 - Societal expectations vs. biblical convictions
 - How to be both welcoming and theologically grounded
 - Training needed for gracious engagement with cultural issues

IMPORTANT: These are not signs of a dying church, but areas where godly leadership and congregational commitment can bring renewal and growth. We acknowledge these challenges honestly so we can address them faithfully.

Mission & Vision

Do you have a recently articulated mission/vision for ministry? Yes

If yes, describe:

Recommended Response:

MISSION STATEMENT:

"EQUIPPING DISCIPLES TO BECOME NEIGHBORS; INVITING NEIGHBORS TO BECOME DISCIPLES"

This mission statement reflects our commitment to both internal discipleship and external evangelism/service. Survey responses indicate congregation is familiar with and supportive of this statement.

LIVING IT OUT:

Congregation believes we are living this mission "moderately well" to "well" through:

EQUIPPING DISCIPLES:

- Small groups and Bible studies (51 survey participants across various groups)
- Reformed theological teaching
- Worship that forms spiritual practices
- Ministry involvement opportunities

BECOMING NEIGHBORS:

- Food pantry (most cited example)
- Community nights in parking lot
- Friendship Group
- School partnerships (Mulick Park mentoring)
- Known presence in Southeast GR neighborhood

INVITING NEIGHBORS:

- GEMS/Cadets draw many outside church
- Welcoming worship services
- Community events as entry points
- Personal relationships and hospitality

AREAS FOR GROWTH:

- More intentional equipping for personal evangelism
- Better follow-up and integration of newcomers
- Training in how to share faith naturally
- Bridge-building with diverse neighbors

STATED GOALS FOR NEXT 3-5 YEARS:

1. Expanding kids/youth ministries
2. Expanding diversity (ethnic, economic, generational)
3. Growing community outreach

NEED: The congregation desires the new pastor to help clarify and cast vision for living out this mission in the next season of church life. "Establishing a clear direction" was mentioned by multiple respondents as a priority.

Notable Recent Events

What has been the most interesting and challenging event in the life of your church in the last three years?

Recommended Response:

[COMMITTEE TO COMPLETE - should include:]

1. COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT (likely)
 - Survey mentions several "not resumed since COVID" items:
 - * Adult choir (requested to return)
 - * Short-term missions
 - * Some fellowship meals
 - Transition to streaming services (now part of regular practice)
 - Changed worship participation patterns
2. PASTORAL TRANSITION
 - Pastor Ben's departure (mentioned in survey with some disappointment about commitment level)
 - Survey references about previous pastors: "Van Aragon, Admiraal, Sturing"
 - Current excellent interim leadership (Pastor Stan repeatedly praised)
 - Pastor Sarah's ongoing ministry valued
3. DENOMINATIONAL TENSIONS (likely)
 - CRC's human sexuality synod decisions

- Churches leaving denomination
 - PHCRC decision to remain in CRC
 - Internal discussions about this decision
 - Need to navigate diverse views within congregation
4. [OTHER CHURCH-SPECIFIC EVENTS - Committee to add:]
- Building projects?
 - Staff changes?
 - Ministry launches/endings?
 - Significant losses or celebrations?

IMPACT: These events have shaped the congregation's current posture:

- Desire for stability and long-term pastoral commitment
 - Need for healing and unity around denominational issues
 - Appreciation for flexibility and adaptation (COVID lessons)
 - Renewed focus on what matters most: gospel, community, mission
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Denomination Relationship

Describe your understanding of the relationship between the local church and the Christian Reformed denomination:

Recommended Response (must acknowledge tension):

Plymouth Heights' relationship with the Christian Reformed denomination is VALUED BUT COMPLEX, with a range of perspectives in the congregation.

POSITIVE ASPECTS:

- Church chose to remain in CRC denomination
- Appreciation for Reformed theological heritage
- Benefit from denominational resources and support (especially during pastoral search process)
- Connection to broader Reformed community
- Historical identity matters to many members
- Some state: "Relationship is very good, probably better than many other CRC churches"

CHALLENGES & CONCERNS:

- Recent synodical decisions (particularly regarding human sexuality) have created tension
- Some feel "decisions that divide churches are harmful to denomination"
- Range of views on denominational authority and positions
- Questions about whether CRC leadership represents local church values
- Some members express "unstable ground" regarding synod

DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS IN CONGREGATION:

- TRADITIONAL: Appreciate CRC's firm stance; "grateful for PHCRC's loyalty to denominational positions on human sexuality"
- MODERATE: Value denomination but wish for less divisiveness; desire unity and grace
- PROGRESSIVE: Struggle with "heavy-handed synod decisions"; want more inclusion and diversity
- PRAGMATIC: "Relationship diminished to virtually nothing" for some; question relevance

PASTORAL NEED:

The new pastor must be able to:

1. Navigate theological diversity with grace while maintaining biblical conviction
2. Help congregation "live peaceably in diverse culture with opposing agendas"
3. Unite around core gospel essentials while allowing space on secondary issues
4. Respect denomination without being controlled by politics
5. Focus on local church health and mission within denominational context

PLYMOUTH HEIGHTS' POSITION:

We are committed to remaining in the CRC denomination while maintaining a pastoral, grace-filled approach to those who see things differently. We value our Reformed identity and seek to be a healthy, missional CRC congregation that can hold together diverse perspectives under the lordship of Christ.

The ideal pastor will be supportive of this approach and skilled at pastoral leadership amid theological diversity.

Major Goals & Opportunities

List major goals that this congregation has set for itself or opportunities the congregation anticipates:

Recommended Response:

Based on congregational input, Plymouth Heights identifies these major goals for the next 3-5 years:

1. ATTRACT, RETAIN, AND DISCIPLE NEXT GENERATION (Top Priority)
 - Bring in young families (20s-40s demographic)
 - Strengthen youth programs (middle school through young adult)
 - Create compelling reasons for young people to stay/join
 - Support Christian education partnerships
 - Fill the "middle age gap" (parents of teenagers)
 - Ensure long-term sustainability through generational renewal
2. FOSTER DEEP SENSE OF BELONGING
 - Move beyond "welcoming" to true integration
 - Create clear pathways for new member involvement
 - Build authentic community through meals, small groups, fellowship
 - Bridge insider/outsider dynamics
 - Help people discover and use their gifts
 - Strengthen household connections and mentoring
3. EXPAND AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITY OUTREACH
 - Continue and grow food pantry ministry
 - Year-round community engagement (beyond summer)
 - Partner with other churches, schools, and agencies
 - Become more known and trusted in Southeast GR
 - Possible new initiatives: daycare, international students, neighborhood sports
 - Balance expansion with volunteer capacity
4. GROW IN DIVERSITY (Ethnic, Economic, Cultural)

- Better reflect the diversity of our neighborhood
 - Create welcoming space for people of all backgrounds
 - International student outreach (Calvin University proximity)
 - Intentional inclusion of diverse family structures
 - Cultural competence and sensitivity training
5. PROVIDE EXCELLENT BIBLICAL TEACHING
 - Consistent, excellent preaching as foundation
 - Expand adult discipleship offerings (Bible studies, Sunday School)
 - Youth teaching and formation
 - Practical application of Reformed theology to daily life
 - Use of technology to enhance learning
 6. CLARIFY IDENTITY AND DIRECTION
 - Answer the question: "What is our mission NOW?"
 - Unite around clear vision for future
 - Learn from thriving churches
 - Possible collaboration with other area CRC churches
 - Document and communicate our core beliefs clearly
 7. HEAL AND BUILD UNITY
 - Navigate denominational tensions gracefully
 - Build bridges across generational divides
 - Foster spirit of hopefulness about future
 - Move from survival mentality to thriving mindset
 - Celebrate what God is doing while addressing challenges
 8. STRENGTHEN STAFF AND LEADERSHIP
 - Healthy pastoral and staff team dynamics
 - Clear roles and communication
 - Support structures for pastor
 - Collaborative lay/pastoral leadership
 - Long-term commitment and stability
 9. EXPAND DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAYS
 - Restore adult choir
 - Consider evening services or alternative gatherings
 - Mission trip opportunities
 - More fellowship meals and social connections
 - College-age and young professional ministries
 10. BE A HEALTHY CRC CHURCH
 - Model what a grace-filled, missional, biblically grounded CRC church looks like
 - Offer alternative for those dissatisfied with current church options
 - "Make Plymouth alive to honor God and give others the good news"
 - Balance Reformed identity with contemporary relevance

OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT:

We believe Plymouth Heights has tremendous opportunity for renewal and growth if we focus strategically on these priorities under wise pastoral leadership. We are not a dying church but a congregation poised for a new season of fruitful ministry. With the right pastoral leadership, committed membership, and God's blessing, we can become a vibrant, multigenerational, diverse community that

glorifies God and serves our neighbors effectively.

Reformed Identity

Describe what being Christians of Reformed accent means to you:

Recommended Response:

For Plymouth Heights congregation, being "Christians of Reformed accent" means:

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS:

- Commitment to historic Reformed doctrines rooted in Scripture
- Appreciation for catechism, confessions (Belgic, Heidelberg, Canons of Dort)
- Reformed understanding of God's sovereignty, grace, and covenant
- World-and-life view that integrates faith into all areas of life
- "Reformed theology informs daily decisions"

WORSHIP & PRACTICE:

- Liturgical worship that reflects Reformed tradition
- Emphasis on preaching and teaching of the Word
- Sacraments (baptism and communion) as means of grace
- Congregational singing as theological formation
- Prayer as central spiritual discipline

LIVING FAITH:

- "We live in grateful response to God" (not works-righteousness)
- Integration of faith, work, family, citizenship
- Cultural engagement rather than withdrawal
- Justice, mercy, and compassion as expressions of faith
- "God-focused and directed" rather than human-centered

REFORMED AND REFORMING:

- "Semper reformanda" - always reforming according to Scripture
- Willingness to learn and grow in understanding
- Balance between theological rigor and pastoral warmth
- Not rigid traditionalism, but faithful continuity with historic Christianity

COMMUNITY & EDUCATION:

- Value for Christian education (schools, training, discipleship)
- Covenantal understanding of family and church
- Multi-generational faith formation
- Intellectual engagement with Scripture and theology

CHALLENGES IN LIVING IT OUT:

- Need for clearer teaching on what Reformed theology means
- "Doctrine is a lost cause at PH" (one dissenting view)
- Younger generations may not understand Reformed distinctives
- Balance between Reformed identity and contemporary accessibility
- Some see Reformed theology as background, others want it foregrounded

WHAT WE SEEK IN A PASTOR:

- Ability to teach Reformed theology clearly and compellingly
- Connect historic doctrines to contemporary life
- "Show us what it means to be Christian with Reformed perspective"

- Help younger generations appreciate and own Reformed identity
- Not merely academic but pastoral and practical

SUMMARY:

Being Reformed for us means being deeply rooted in historic Christian orthodoxy as expressed through Reformed confessions, living out our faith in all of life as grateful response to God's grace, and continually being reformed by the Word of God through the Spirit's work. We want to pass this heritage to the next generation in ways that are both faithful to our roots and relevant to our context.

Church History

What have been the three most important events in the history of your church?

[COMMITTEE MUST COMPLETE - Survey did not ask this]

Guidance: Committee should consult church historical records, long-time members, and documents to identify: 1. Founding/origin story 2. Significant building projects or relocations 3. Major revivals or growth periods 4. Notable pastoral tenures 5. Defining moments of mission or identity

Survey references suggest these pastors were significant: Van Aragon, Admiraal, Sturing, and more recently Ben, Steve, Doug. Consider whether their tenures represent important historical moments.

Cultural Challenges

Identify some of the cultural challenges facing Christians and Christian churches today:

Recommended Response:

Plymouth Heights congregation identifies these cultural challenges:

1. NURTURING YOUNG PEOPLE AS LIFELONG PARTICIPANTS (69% cited - #1 challenge)
 - Competing worldviews and priorities pull youth away from church
 - "Busy lives/competing priorities" (59%) - sports, work, screens
 - Cultural messages that undermine Christian formation
 - Need to make faith compelling for digital generation
 - Challenge: How to disciple youth so they stay engaged as adults
2. BUSY LIVES & COMPETING PRIORITIES (59% cited - #2 challenge)
 - Families over-scheduled with work, school, activities
 - Sunday morning no longer sacred in cultural calendar
 - Volunteerism declining due to time constraints
 - Church competes with endless options for time/attention
 - Challenge: How to foster commitment without adding burnout
3. BRINGING IN AND INTEGRATING COMMUNITY MEMBERS (35%)
 - Cultural distance between church and unchurched
 - Many don't understand Christian language or practices
 - Stigma or irrelevance of church in culture
 - Initial welcome easier than long-term integration
 - Challenge: How to be both faithful and accessible
4. GENDER IDENTIFICATION & NON-TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIPS (19%)
 - Cultural shift on sexuality and gender happening rapidly

- Biblical teaching increasingly counter-cultural
 - LGBTQ+ issues create internal church tensions
 - "Who are we to judge?" vs. "What does Scripture teach?"
 - Challenge: How to be both truthful and gracious
5. SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS & PRESSURES (10%)
- Cancel culture and polarization
 - Political tribalism affecting church unity
 - Social media amplifying conflict
 - Pressure to conform to cultural norms
 - Challenge: How to be distinct without being harsh or withdrawn
6. DENOMINATIONAL DIVISIONS
- Churches splitting over secondary issues
 - Human sexuality debates fracturing congregations
 - Authority questions: local church vs. denomination
 - Unity challenged by theological diversity
 - Challenge: How to maintain both conviction and community
7. SECULARIZATION & RELIGIOUS DECLINE
- "Nones" and "dones" growing (religiously unaffiliated)
 - Christianity no longer cultural default
 - Younger generations leaving faith
 - Post-Christian cultural context
 - Challenge: How to be missional minority rather than cultural majority
8. DISCIPLESHIP GAPS
- Biblical illiteracy even among church members
 - Shallow spirituality rather than deep formation
 - Consumer mentality toward church
 - Faith not integrated into daily life
 - Challenge: How to form disciples, not just attract attendees
9. RACIAL & CULTURAL TENSIONS
- Polarization over race, justice, politics
 - White evangelical identity issues
 - Creating welcoming space for racial/ethnic diversity
 - "Creating welcoming space for more diverse populations outside white community"
 - Challenge: How to pursue biblical justice and reconciliation
10. MAINTAINING JOY & HOPE
- Easy to be defensive, anxious, or judgmental
 - Cultural negativity affecting church attitudes
 - Need for "happy place" where God's presence felt
 - "Worship should be our happy place more often than not"
 - Challenge: How to be countercultural through joy, not just opposition

PASTORAL ROLE IN NAVIGATING CHALLENGES:

The congregation looks to the new pastor to:

- Provide clear biblical teaching on cultural issues
- Model grace and truth held together
- Equip members for faithful engagement
- Help church be prophetic without being harsh

- Build resilience and hope in difficult times
- "Teach people how to live peaceably in diverse culture with opposing agendas and political ideologies"

We need a pastor who can help us be distinctly Christian and Reformed while remaining winsome, engaged, and hopeful in an increasingly post-Christian culture.

Final Recommendations for Search Committee

PROFILE COMPLETION CHECKLIST:

Completed with survey data: - Community setting (Suburban, Declining) - Pastoral position details (Full-time, experienced) - Worship description (Blended, liturgical, biblical preaching) - Discipleship practices (variety of offerings) - Church characteristics (all scales with data support) - Narrative responses (all major sections)

Requires committee to complete: - Specific demographic percentages (age, occupation, tenure) - Financial details (budgets, salaries, benefits) - Facility information (buildings, parsonage, office) - Church history (three most important events) - Staff positions available - Recent pastoral history (last three pastors)

EMPHASIS POINTS FOR PASTORAL CANDIDATES:

What we offer: - Committed, engaged congregation (94% weekly attendance) - Strong worship tradition with musical variety - Active community presence and outreach - Small group culture and discipleship opportunities - Mission-focused identity - Supportive lay leadership structure

What we need: - Exceptional biblical preacher (non-negotiable) - Relational, hands-on leader who will stay long-term - Youth/young adult engagement skills - Ability to navigate denominational tensions with grace - Collaborative style with staff and lay leaders - Vision for next season of church life

First year priorities: - Build relationships (learn names, visit ministries, know community) - Preach with excellence - Foster sense of belonging - Listen and discern before leading major changes - Bring proposal for direction at end of year

INTERVIEW RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR:

Short tenure pattern at previous churches - Primarily administrative focus without strong preaching - Rigid ideologue who can't navigate theological diversity - "Lone ranger" who doesn't work well with staff/teams - More interested in programs than people - Treats position as career stepping stone

GREEN FLAGS TO LOOK FOR:

Track record of excellent preaching - Long tenures showing commitment - Stories of building authentic relationships - Experience with multi-generational ministry - Wisdom navigating cultural tensions - Collaborative leadership style - Passion for next generation - "Calls people's names" and knows congregation personally

This guidance document should be used alongside the actual survey data, visualizations, and comprehensive analysis report to complete the church profile form accurately and comprehensively.

Committee: Please review all sections, add missing information from church records, and adjust any recommendations that don't align with council's assessment. The survey provides congregation's voice - combine with leadership wisdom for complete picture.