

Executive Summary

Plymouth Heights CRC Congregational Survey Analysis

Date: December 2025 **Survey Responses:** 68 **Analysis Type:** Quantitative + Qualitative

Quick Overview

This survey analysis reveals a **highly committed, missionally engaged congregation** that values biblical preaching and community presence, while acknowledging significant challenges in youth retention and denominational tensions. The congregation has spoken clearly about their needs for the next pastor.

The Numbers

Metric	Value
Total Responses	68
Weekly Attenders	94%
Involved Beyond Sunday	88%
Music Preference (1-5 scale)	2.91 (Blended, slight traditional lean)
Member Involvement Level	2.82 (Appropriate)
Missional Balance Rating	3.46 (Good balance local/global)

Top 5 Church Strengths

1. **Worship Services** - 68% cited
 2. **Community Presence** - 47% cited
 3. **Youth Program Ministries** - 46% cited
 4. **Value for Diversity** - 44% cited
 5. **Leadership** - 29% cited
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Top 5 Challenges

1. **Nurturing Young People** - 69% (CRITICAL)
 2. **Busy Lives/Competing Priorities** - 59%
 3. **Welcoming Community Members** - 35%
 4. **Age Gaps in Congregation** - 29%
 5. **New Member Integration** - 29%
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What the Congregation Wants in a Pastor

Non-Negotiables

1. **Exceptional biblical preacher** - most cited requirement
2. **Strong relational skills** - able to connect with all ages
3. **Long-term commitment** - not a stepping stone position
4. **Leadership capacity** - can cast vision and lead
5. **Staff leadership** - works well with team

Highly Desired

- Youth/young adult engagement skills
- Community engagement passion
- Cultural sensitivity on divisive issues
- Technology competence
- Collaborative style with lay leaders
- Sense of humor

First Year Priorities

1. **Fostering belonging** (31% mentioned)
 2. **Strong preaching** (19%)
 3. **Youth programs** (18%)
 4. **Get to know everyone** (16%)
 5. **Community engagement** (15%)
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Critical Insights

Youth Exodus Crisis

- **69% identified youth retention as #1 challenge**
- “Younger generation moving away”
- “Middle age gap - parents of teenagers missing”
- This is the single most urgent issue

Belonging Gap

- 29% say “we welcome but don’t integrate”
- Need clearer pathways to involvement
- Insider/outsider dynamics exist
- Fellowship meals and hospitality valued

Denominational Tension

- **Mixed views on CRC relationship**
- Range from “very good” to “unstable ground”
- Human sexuality positions create disagreement
- Pastor must navigate this with wisdom and grace

Pastoral Turnover Impact

- References to disappointment with previous pastor’s departure
 - Multiple mentions: “Get along with staff!!!”
 - Desire for long-term committed leadership
 - Need for healing and stability
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Ministry Participation Snapshot

Top Ministries: - Adult Book Studies: 26 participants - Small Groups: 25 participants - Community Nights: 24 participants - Youth Programs: 15 participants - Food Pantry: 12 participants - Sunday Only: 8 people (12%)

Worship Preferences

Music Style Breakdown

Rating	Description	Percentage
1	Fully Traditional	1.5%
2	Lean Traditional	25%
3	Balanced	54% ← MAJORITY
4	Lean Contemporary	19%
5	Fully Contemporary	0%

Key Finding: Strong consensus for blended worship. No one wants fully contemporary.

What People Love About Worship

- Biblical, gospel-centered preaching
- Musical variety (organ, piano, guitars, brass)
- Traditional liturgical structure
- Multigenerational participation
- Pastor Stan's teaching with visuals

What People Want Changed

- More contemporary songs (some)
- Adult choir return (multiple requests)
- More congregational singing energy
- Use of technology
- Less organ (some) vs. more organ (others)

Goals for Next 3-5 Years

1. **Attract and retain young families** (most cited)
2. **Foster deep sense of belonging**
3. **Expand community outreach** sustainably
4. **Grow in diversity** (ethnic, economic, cultural)
5. **Provide excellent biblical teaching**
6. **Clarify identity and direction**
7. **Heal and build unity** amid denominational tensions
8. **Strengthen staff dynamics**

Red Flags for Candidates

Short tenure pattern at previous churches Primarily administrative, weak preaching Rigid ideologue who can't navigate diversity Poor staff relationship history Programs over people focus Views position as career stepping stone

Green Flags to Look For

Track record of excellent preaching Long tenures showing commitment Stories of authentic relationships
Multi-generational ministry experience Wisdom navigating cultural tensions Collaborative leadership
Passion for next generation “Learns and uses people’s names”

Denominational Relationship Spectrum

Supportive: “Glad we’re in CRC” | “Good resource” | “Loyal to positions” ↓ **Moderate:** “Value but concerned about divisions” | “Relationship complex” ↓ **Critical:** “Unstable ground” | “Heavy-handed decisions” | “Diminished to nothing”

Pastor Need: Must unite congregation around gospel essentials while allowing space on secondary issues. Grace + Truth.

Interview Questions to Ask

About Tenure

- What’s your typical length of pastoral service?
- What would cause you to leave a congregation?

About Preaching

- Describe your preaching philosophy
- How do you make Scripture relevant to daily life?

About Staff

- How do you lead and collaborate with ministry staff?
- Describe a time you worked through staff conflict

About Divisive Issues

- How do you pastor a congregation with diverse views?
- What’s your approach to CRC positions on sexuality?

About Youth

- What experience engaging 20s-40s age group?
 - How do you make church compelling for next generation?
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Key Quotes from Congregation

On Preaching: > “Exceptional preacher and teacher of the word is the number one priority”

On Commitment: > “Long-term commitment to this local congregation because Pastor Ben did not show that type of commitment”

On Relationships: > “First the pastor needs to learn the names of the people he/she shepherds”

On Youth Crisis: > “We are seeing the younger generation slowly moving away from PHCRC”

On Belonging: > “We welcome people warmly, but new members often don’t feel they truly belong”

On Denominational Tension: > “We’re on unstable ground when it comes to Synod leadership”

On Future Hope: > “Excited commitment to extend a really good church into something that speaks volumes of God’s love around us”

Bottom Line for Search Committee

Plymouth Heights is a **theologically grounded, missionally engaged, worship-centered congregation** with:

Strong foundation: Committed members, good programs, community presence **Critical need:** Youth retention and next generation engagement **Healing needed:** Unity amid denominational tensions, staff dynamics **Clear ask:** Exceptional preacher who is relational, committed long-term, and can lead renewal

The right pastor can lead this church into a thriving new season. The wrong fit could accelerate decline.

Next Steps

1. Read full analysis report (analysis_report.md)
 2. Review profile form guidance (profile_guidance.md)
 3. Examine all visualizations (figures/)
 4. Complete church profile form
 5. Submit to pastoral search coordinator
 6. Use interview framework when meeting candidates
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The congregation has spoken. Now lead wisely.