

# “The Current Reality of FBC Thomson”

## External Demographics: The Mission Field of FBC Thomson

This demographic study was provided by the Leavell Center for Evangelism & Church Health, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The study looks at those living within 5-minute, 10-minute, and 20-minute drive times of the church.

### Population

Nearly 28,000 people live within a 20-minute drive of our church. The population has been slowly shifting to the east, into Columbia County, and is projected to continue through 2022.

5-mins: 7,292                      10-mins: 13,048                      20-mins: 27,838

### Ethnic Diversity

	5-mins	10-mins	20-mins
White	2,890 (39.6%)	5,620 (43.1%)	14,562 (52.3%)
Black	4,197 (57.6%)	7,056 (54.1%)	12,284 (44.1%)
Other	205 (2.8%)	372 (2.8%)	990 (3.6%)
<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>123 (1.7%)</i>	<i>223 (1.7%)</i>	<i>722 (2.6%)</i>

### Age Groups and Household Types

Median Age: 5-mins: 37      10-mins: 39.1      20-mins: 42.2

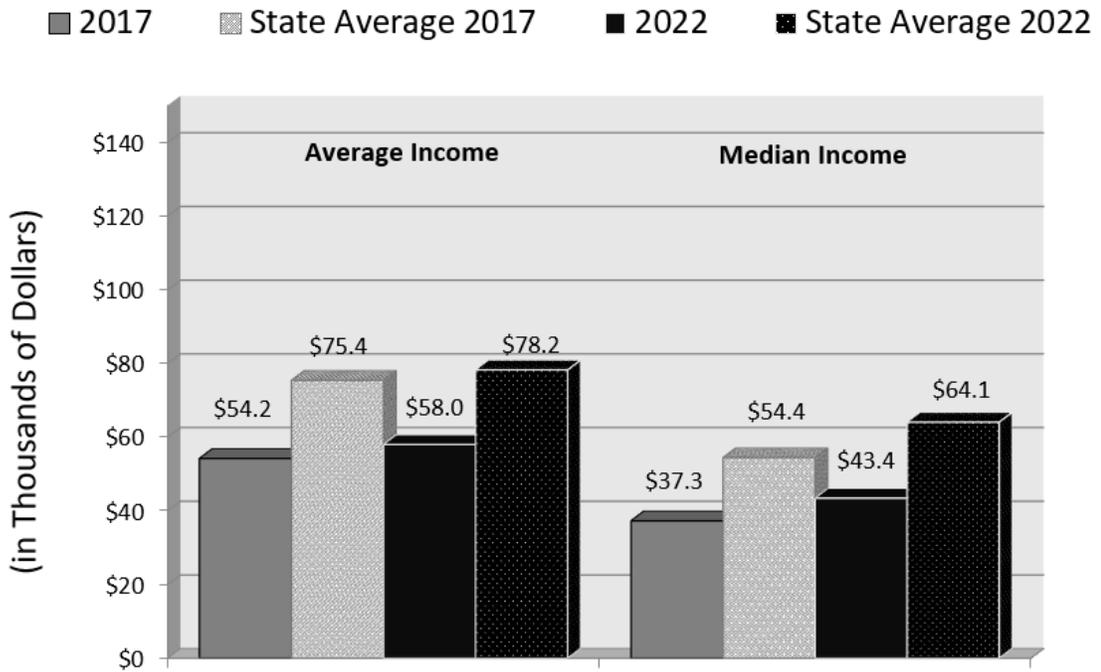
	5-mins	10-mins	20-mins
Under age 18	1,907 (26.2%)	3,414 (26.2%)	6,952 (25%)
Ages 19-54	3,262 (44.7%)	5,797 (44.4%)	12,346 (44.3%)
Age 55 and over	2,123 (29.1%)	3,837 (29.4%)	8,540 (30.7%)

5-minutes: 319 households/sq mi. have children under 18 years of age (54.5% of total)

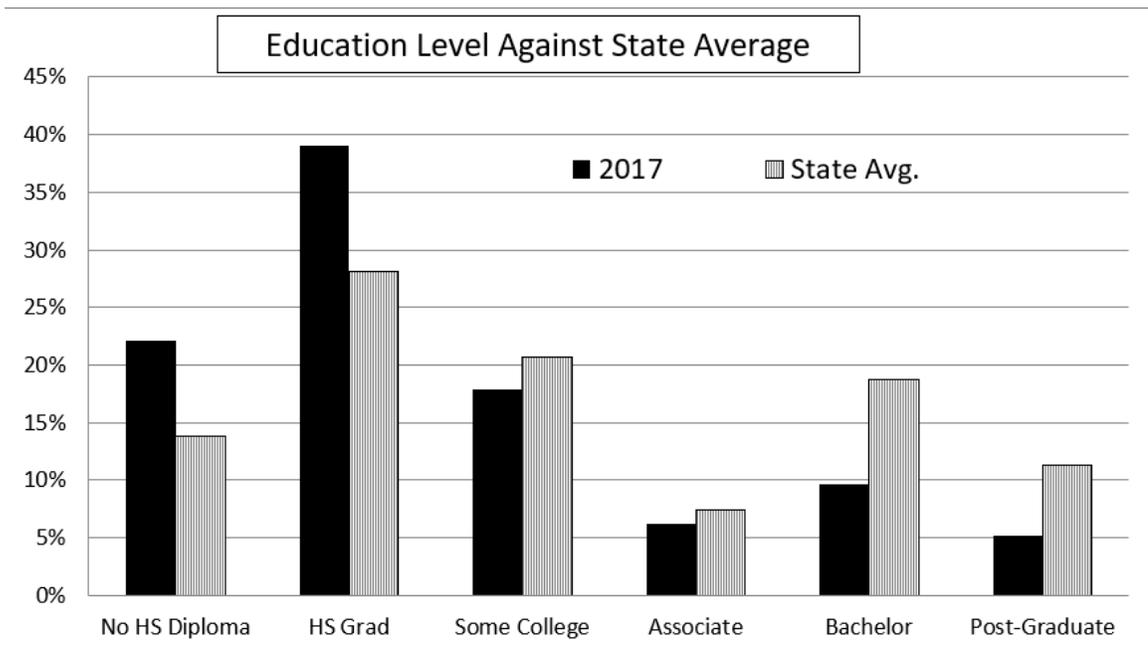
20-minutes: 49 households/sq mi. have children under 18 years of age (48% of total)

**Economics and Education**

Average & Median Household Incomes  
(within a 20-minute drivetime)

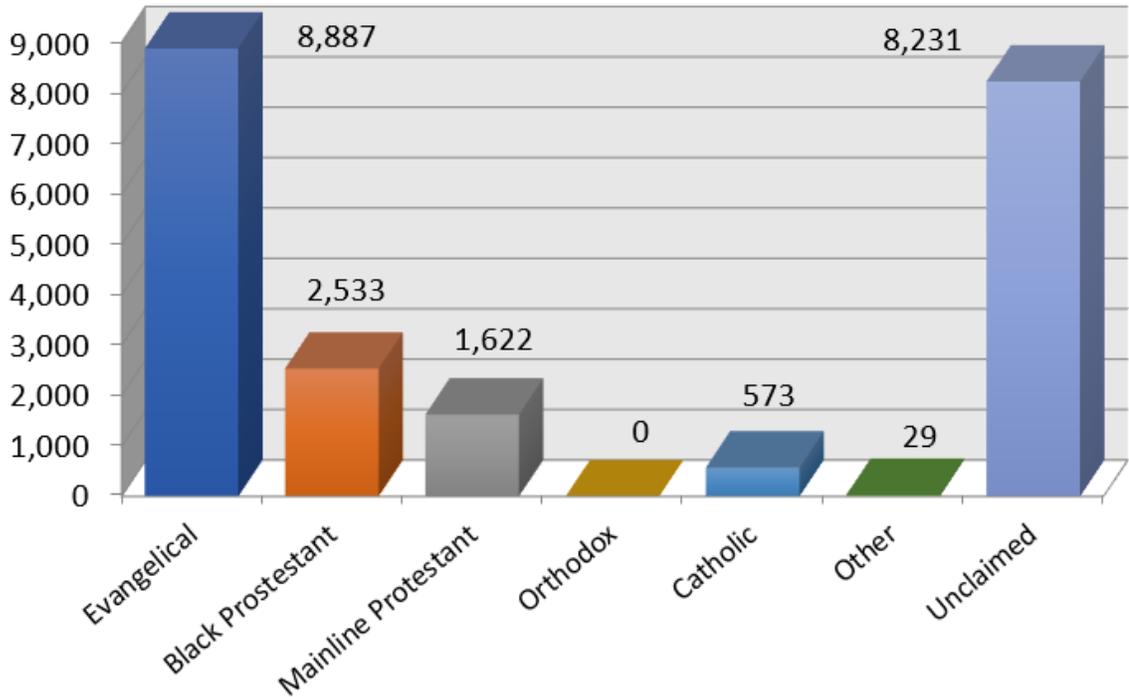


Adults 25 and older, within a 20-minute drivetime



## Religious Affiliation

Membership Report for McDuffie County - Year 2010



The “Nones” are a growing demographic in America, made up of those who indicate no religious affiliation. According to research, “Religious ‘nones’ are the second-largest religious tradition in the United States...55 million American adults claim their faith to be nothing in particular.”<sup>1</sup>

## Local Issues

UGA Archway Partnership identified four priorities:

1. Communication and Community Branding
2. Leadership Development
3. Education and Workforce
4. Health and Wellness

## Implications of this Demographic Report

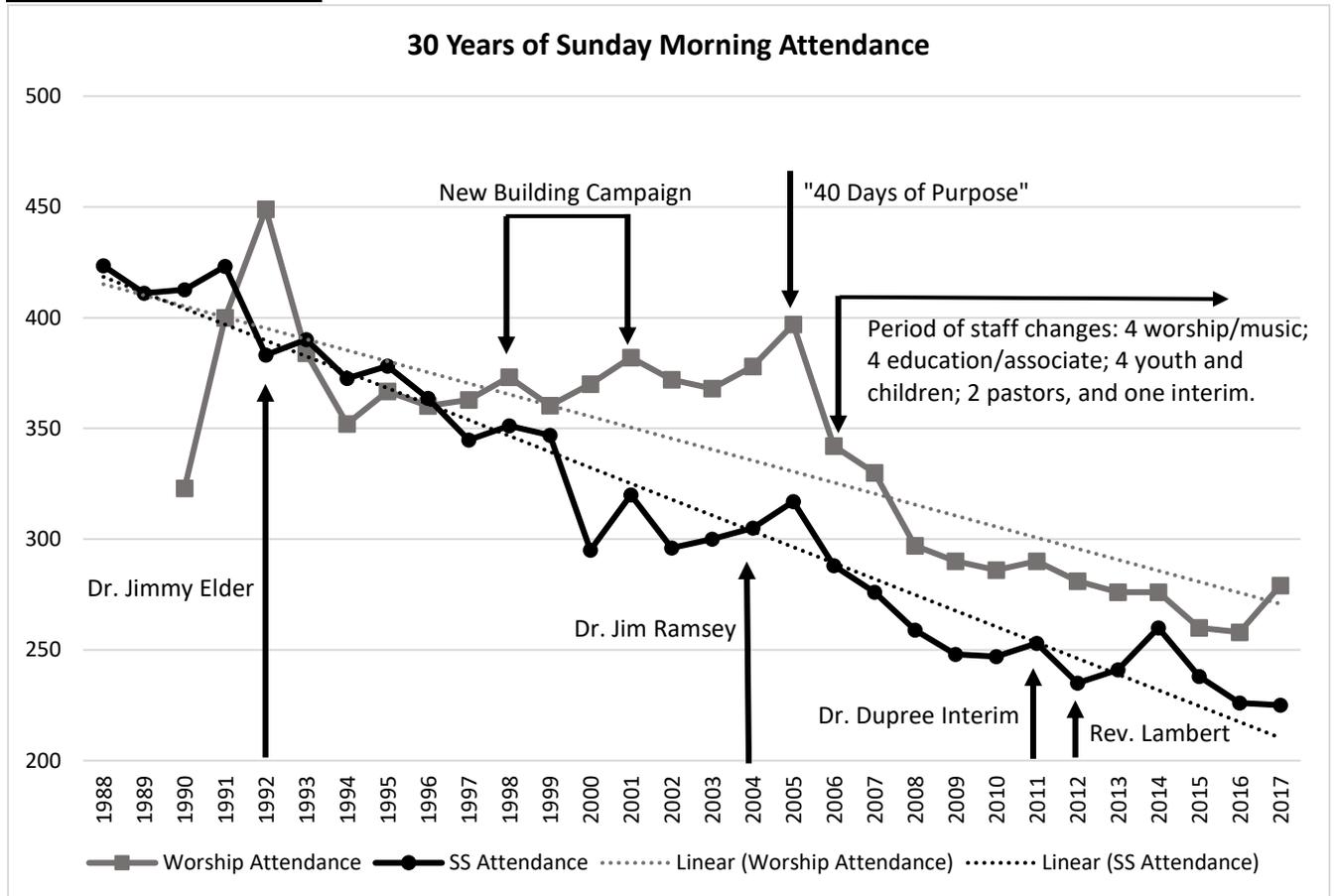
1. Our church address is not an accident.
2. Our community is not an accident.
3. Our calling is not an accident.

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1. Bob Ditmer, “It’s Time to Take Another Look at the Religious ‘Nones,’” ChurchLeaders.com, February 6, 2018. <https://churchleaders.com/news/318887-time-take-another-look-religious-nones.html>.

## Internal Assessment: The Health and Growth of FBC Thomson

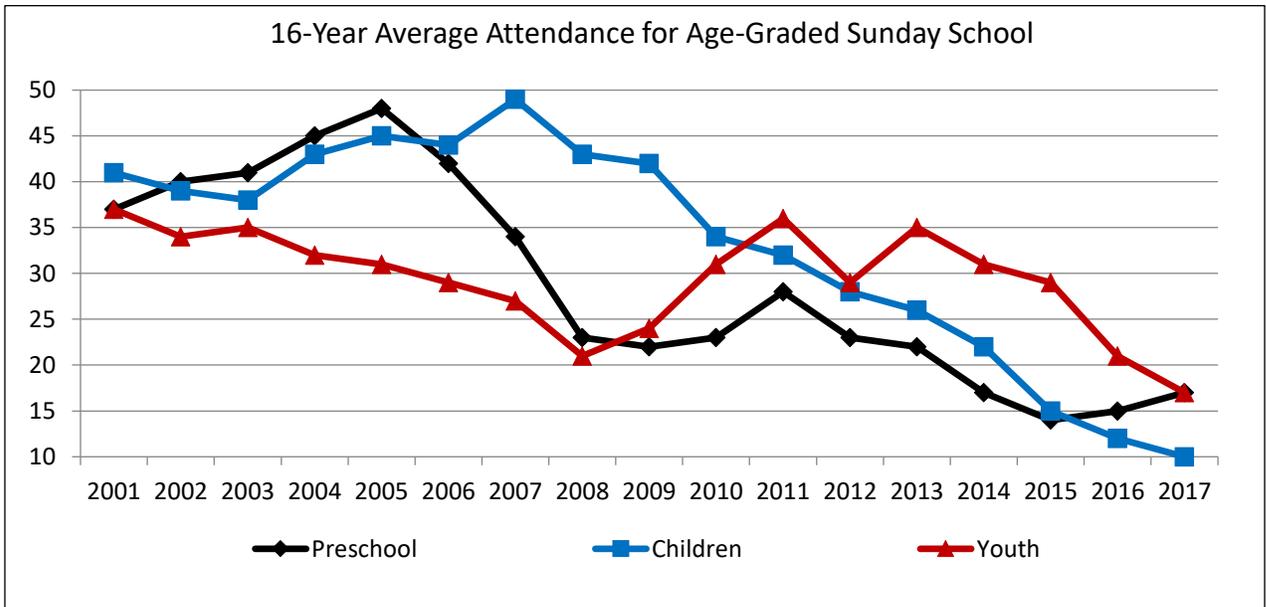
### Attendance Patterns



- Since 1988, worship attendance declined by 38%, while Sunday School attendance declined by 47%.
- “About 20 years ago, a church member was considered active in the church if he or she attended three times a week. Today, a church member is considered active in the church if he or she attends three times a month.” –Thom Rainer
- Attendance highly affected by staff and events in the life of the church.

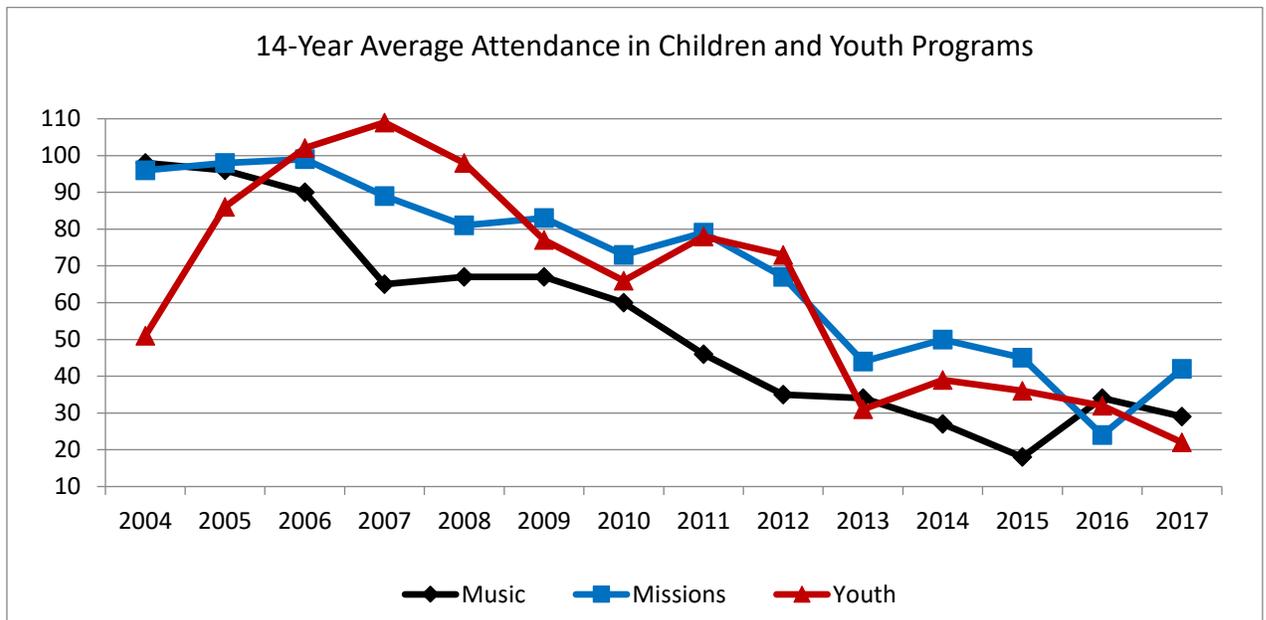
### Children and Youth Attendance

- Sunday School:
  - Preschool attendance decreased by 54%.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade attendance dropped by 76%.
  - 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade attendance declined by 54%.



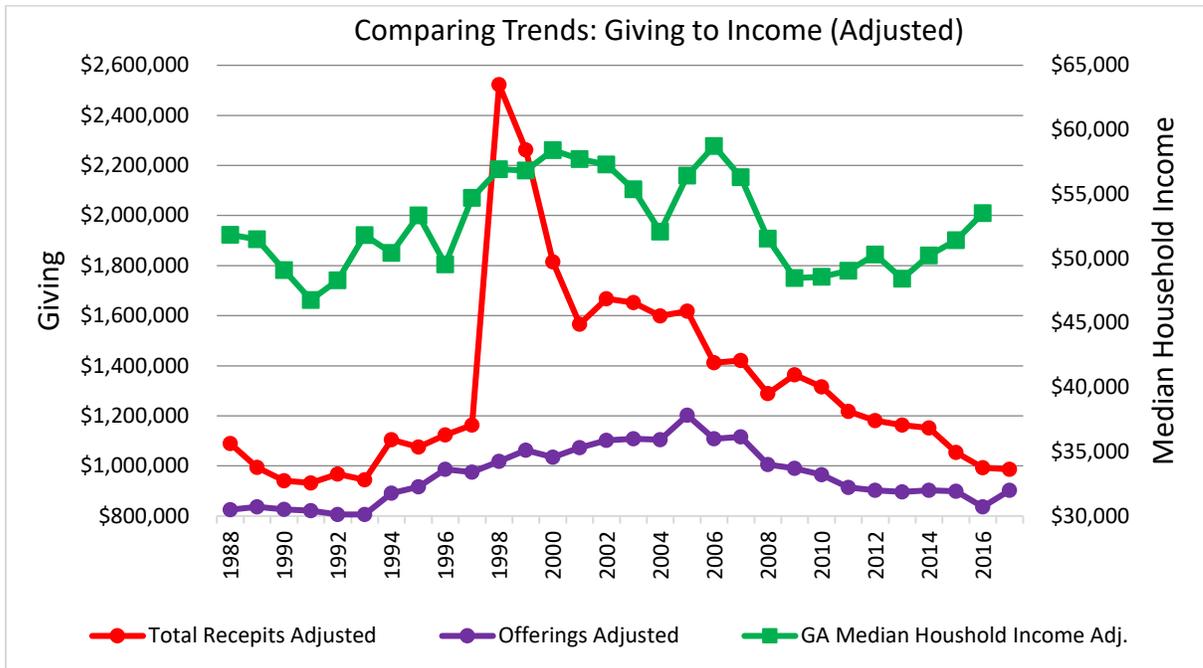
• Music, Missions, and Youth:

- Age-graded music programs declined by 70%.
- Age-graded missions programs declined by 56%.
- Wednesday youth group meetings saw a drop of 57%.



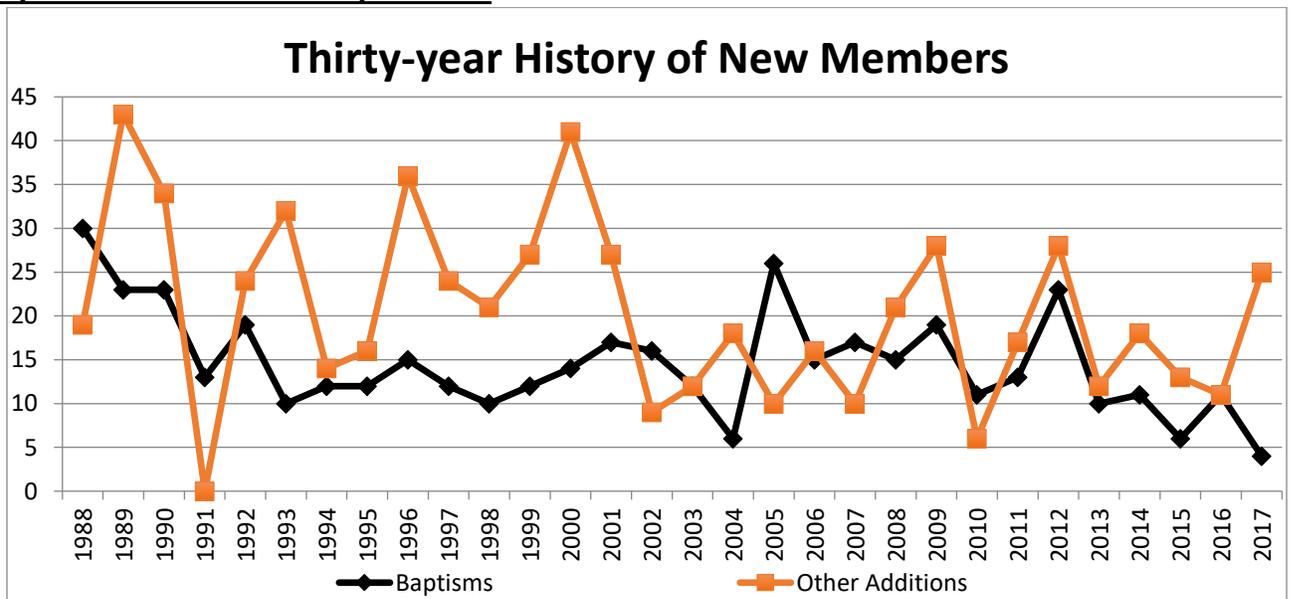
**Giving Trends**

- Median household income remained relatively flat over the same period, meaning per person giving has increased.



- Giving trends can be analyzed considering significant events in the life of the church:
  - 1997-2001: The Capital Campaign for the Family Ministries Center.
  - 2005: “Forty Days of Purpose”
  - As the “New Building” debt was retired, designated offerings declined sharply. In 2017, total receipts were only \$85,000 above undesignated.

**Baptism and Membership Trends**



- Since 1988, resident membership declined by 15%.
- Since 1988, annual baptisms have declined by 87%, but were only down 76% between 2007 to 2017.

- Resident Membership to Baptism Ratio: 1988—37:1; 2007—48:1; 2017—236:1.
- Worship Attendance to Baptism Ratio: 1990—14:1; 2007—19:1; 2017—70:1.
- FBC saw a 32% increase in other additions from 1988 to 2017, with a great amount of fluctuation in between.

### **Worship Service Assessment                      Sunday, August 26, 2018**

Fifteen worshippers from a cross-section of the congregation. Similar results were achieved with a worship survey in 2016.

- All indicated favorable views of the worship service.
- The welcome from the pulpit and the order of worship helped them feel welcome and connected with others. “Other worshippers” was rated least welcoming.
- Congregational singing was described as fully engaged and celebratory.
- The style of music was described as a good mix of traditional and contemporary and the tone of the service as a blend of formal and casual.
- Everyone was able to identify the theme of the worship service and indicated that the worship elements connected well with the sermon’s main idea.
- The sermon was described as clear, compelling, personally challenging, biblically faithful, with a clear invitation and call to action.
- The most effective parts of this specific worship service were identified as the Lord’s Supper, sermon, children’s sermon, and music.

### **Church Campus Assessment**

Completed by six people representing diverse ages, life stages, and length of involvement in the church.

#### Strengths of the Campus:

- Facilities and exterior are well-kept, beautiful, and inviting.
- Restrooms are updated, well-lit, clean.
- The sanctuary is welcoming, beautiful, clean, and worshipful.
- Greeters and ushers on Sundays help people navigate and feel welcome.

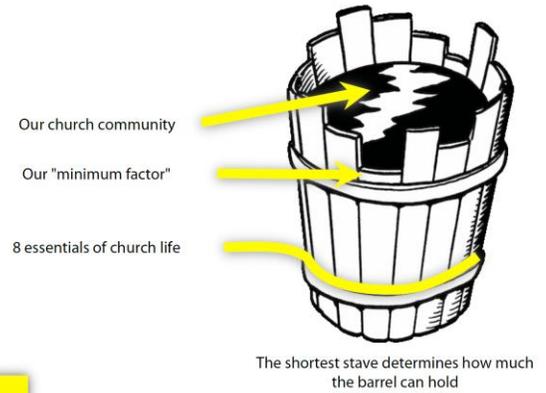
#### Weakness of the Campus:

- Signage needs updating for style and clarity; signs from road not visible.
- Large campus, lots of exterior doors, hard to navigate, intimidating
- Some decor and furnishings indicate an older congregation; needs updating.
- Fifth level is dim, feels institutional, cluttered.
- Welcome centers needed in key places (Atrium, preschool entrance).
- Preschool/Nursery safety and security needs to be addressed.

# Natural Church Development Survey



## Where are we leaking?

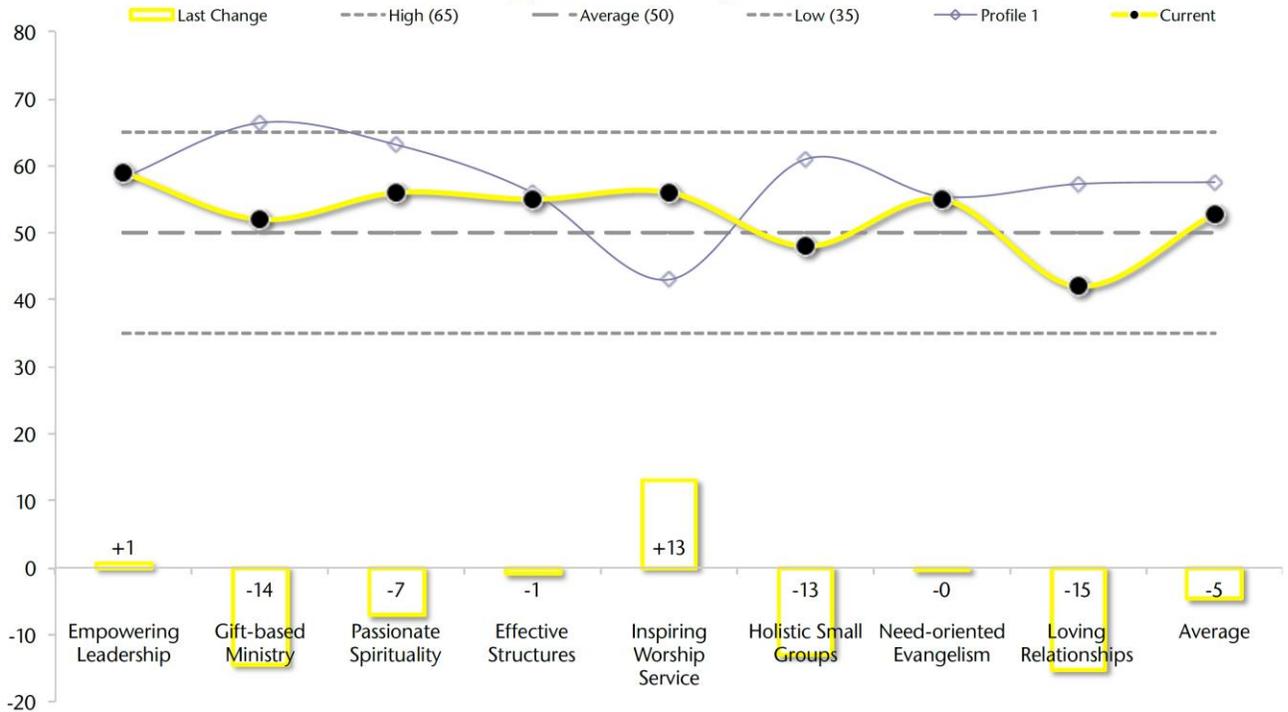


## NCD profile *comparison*

of

### First Baptist Church in Thomson GA

July-2009 to August-2018



**Listening Session Responses** (Numbers in parenthesis indicated how many tables had the same or similar responses.)

1. *What are the trends, forces, and factors in our community and the broader culture that will impact our church (positive or negative)? What are the things happening and changing in the community and culture that will affect the future of our church?*

- Busyness of the Culture (Every table)
- Population Changes (9)
- Divisions in the Community (8)
- School System (8)
- Family Issues (6)
- Gangs/Drugs/Violence (6)
- Economy and Jobs (5)

2. *Based on the trends, forces, and factors that you identified, what are some specific things our church needs to be prepared to do so we can adapt to these changes?*

- Children's Ministry (Every table)
- Worship (8)
- Family-based Ministries (7)
- Media/Marketing (6)
- Youth Ministry (5)
- Member Involvement/Commitment (4)
- Cooperate with Other Churches (4)

3. *Is there any one thing that you would not be willing to do even if it would mean that our church would grow (obviously as long as it is biblical, ethical and moral)?*

- Smoke machines; over-the-top theatrics; loud, concert-style worship; nightclub atmosphere during worship (6)
- Exclusively adhering to any one particular music style (4)

**Objections like these were mentioned at nearly every table:**

- Lower biblical principles/standards
- Accept any sin as "okay," especially homosexuality
- "Feel good"-only preaching as opposed to preaching the Word
- Non-Christian leadership (no blatant sin in leadership)

4. *Imagine our church in ten years. What one-word adjective would you choose to describe our church as you would like to see it in ten years? Specifically, what would you desire to see happen in terms of worship, discipleship, and evangelism/missions?*

Discipleship/Mentoring (7)

Missional (5)

Thriving/Growing/Alive (5)

Connected/Relational (5)

Diverse/Inclusive: Multicultural  
and Multigenerational (5)

Welcoming/Friendly (4)

Purposeful (3)

Christlike/centered (3)

Impactful/Effective (3)

Engaged in Worship (3)

Vital to/Embedded in the Community (3)

5. *Based on factors such as location, facility, staff, programs, and the make-up of our congregation, what can we do that other churches in our community may not be able to do?*

- **Facility, Campus, Location** (Every table)

- Park and Walking Track (Every table)

- Allow community organizations to use our facilities (4)

- Advertising (3)—we're at a busy intersection/bulletin boards at walking tracks

- Be more intentional with reaching out to those on our campus for events or just daily use (3)

- We're a "Gateway" to Thomson (2)

- **Programs**

- Upward Basketball and other sports (5)

- Health and Wellness Ministry (5)

- Offer more Classes: FPU, Adult literacy, tutoring for kids, GED, ESOL, parenting, crafts, mechanical/construction (5)

- Counseling ministry (3)

- **Staff/Personnel/Pastors** (5)

- Involved in the community

- Full-time

- Skilled and knowledgeable

- Great support staff makes things run seamlessly

- Contributes to plenty of activities and resources

6. *What three things would you like for our members to say about our church? What three things would you like for our community to say about our church? (Numbers indicate how many individuals answered.)*

Community Involved (27)	Open/Accepting (7)
Loving (23)	Church like a family/home (6)
Caring (20)	Missional/on mission (6)
Gospel/Christ/God-centered (19)	Needs-based Ministry (4)
Welcoming/Inviting (17)	Growing (3)
Friendly (11)	Generous (3)
Biblical/Bible-based (11)	
Serving/Ministering/Helpful (10)	
Real/Genuine/Authentic/Sincere (9)	

Many comments on how church members should feel proud of their church and take ownership/be committed/invest in the church.

### **Project Director's Executive Analysis:**

#### ***Three Revitalization Categories:***

1. **Inward Revitalization**—We can be too focused on ourselves.
  - a) Tend to view programs and ministries as “for us.”
  - b) Closed groups/minds. Too many are satisfied with their current circles.
  - c) Nostalgia over “good ole days”; hanging onto past hurts, rejections, and failures.
  - d) Must rekindle the fire of our spiritual life/Revival.
  
2. **Outward Revitalization**—We need to develop a more outward focus.
  - a) Develop a greater burden for the lost and unchurched.
  - b) Connect more with our neighbors; more Gospel penetration in the community.
  - c) Greater creativity and energy in outreach/evangelism.
  - d) More willingness to diversify who we reach.
  - e) Better outreach to newcomers into the community and to temporary residents.
  - f) Balance ministry ON our campus with more ministry IN the community.
  
3. **Processes**
  - a) Identify, equip, and release people to serve according to their SHAPE.
  - b) Follow-up and Integration of guests and new members.
  - c) Maintain and Maximize facilities/campus (including security).

***Community Needs Identified:***

1. The Lost and Unchurched/Those far from God
2. Economic Depression
3. Moral Failures
4. Struggling School System
5. Lack of (Access/Information about) Community Resources
6. Racial Harmony and Outreach

***Kingdom Principles: "Who Are We?"*****1. Next Generation Ministries**

- Includes ministries to: Babies, Preschoolers, Children, Youth, College-age
- Helping local schools
- Cornerstone Preschool

**2. Family-based Discipleship**

- Resource and train parents to disciple their children.
- Emphasize that spiritual formation begins at home.
- Outreach to families with children
- Ministry to families in crisis
- Multigenerational worship/missions
- Bridging gaps between life-stages AND generations

**3. Gifts-based Ministry**

- Every member is a missionary.
- Membership matters—fully-functioning members.
- Serve now, serve sacrificially.
- Know and serve according to your SHAPE.
- Be generous with time and resources.

**4. Stability and Longevity**

- Of staff; programs and ministries; community presence; missional investment; partnerships (other churches, schools, community organizations, mission groups)
- 160-year heritage

## 5. **Two Journeys of Discipleship**

### a) Inward Journey—Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship

- Being Disciples
- Love God. Love People.
- Come and See

### b) Outward Journey—Evangelism, Missions, Ministry

- Making Disciples
- Love People. Serve the World Together.
- Go and Tell

6. **Creativity and Excellence** in our programs, ministries, and events.

7. **Bible-based and Culturally-engaged** in our teaching, preaching, worship, and ministries.

## 8. **Stewardship of Resources**

- Maintain and Maximize our Campus as a Place of ministry AND as a Base for ministry (Balancing ministries on campus and in community).
- 7-day-a-week-Church

9. **A Welcoming** Church where People Can Belong.

- Door Holders, not Gate Keepers
- Tour Guides, not Travel Agents
- Small groups where people feel connected

10. **Build Trust** through **Needs-based Ministries** so we can share Jesus.

- Wholistic Ministries that meet needs from physical to spiritual
- Truth and Grace

## **Ministries and Programs of the Church based on Purposes:**

*I acknowledge that many of these can fall under multiple categories, but I have tried to differentiate them based on their primary emphasis/needs-met/effects.*

### **1. Evangelism (Outreach)**

- Trunk or Treat\*
- Easter Egg Hunt\*
- Wild Game Supper\*
- Drive-thru Nativity\*
- VBS\*
- Upward Basketball\*

### **2. Missions and Needs-based Evangelism Ministries**

- Honduras\*
- West Virginia\*
- Gatlinburg\*
- Boston/Baltimore Youth Trips\*
- Mission: McDuffie\*
- Wonderfully Stitched\*
- Disaster Relief
- Women's Shelter Baskets
- Angel Tree/DFACS partnership\*
- Partnership with Schools\*
- MANNA
- Cross Train\*
- Benevolence
- Wheelchair Ramps
- Bicycle Ministry\*
- Backpacks for Appalachia\*
- Operation Christmas Child\*

### **3. Discipleship (Christian education and spiritual formation)**

- Sunday School\*
- Cross Currents
- Re:Connect
- Cornerstone Preschool\*
- Nursery\*
- Children: TeamKid, KidVenture\*
- Youth: Elevate, D-Groups, Prayer Breakfast, Student Life Camp\*
- Brotherhood Supper
- Young at Heart
- Ladies Bible Study
- GriefShare
- Financial Peace University
- Media Center\*
- Faith @ Home Center\*

### **4. Worship**

- Corporate Worship Service\*
- Children's Church\*
- Prayer Ministry
- Graded Choirs\*
- Adult Choir
- Handbell Choir\*
- Orchestra
- Worship Support Ministries: Greeters, Ushers, Technicians
- Holy Week Services
- Ash Wednesday
- Advent/Christmas programs\*
- Advent Devotional

*\*Next Gen Ministries*