

St. Paul's

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rochester, Michigan



FEASIBILITY-READINESS STUDY REPORT

PRESENTED BY:

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December 17, 2024

INTRODUCTION

St. Paul's United Methodist Church - Rochester, Michigan

In June of 2024, Horizons Stewardship (Horizons) was contracted to begin a Feasibility-Readiness Study (among other projects) to determine the Potential and Possibility of a capital campaign for St. Paul's United Methodist Church (St. Paul's) in Rochester, Michigan. The capital campaign would be to raise \$2,500,000 primarily for facility maintenance, repairs, updates, and upgrades (please see the St. Paul's Vision Case Statement at the end of this report for the project stack). These projects are not yet prioritized or selected for potential impact.

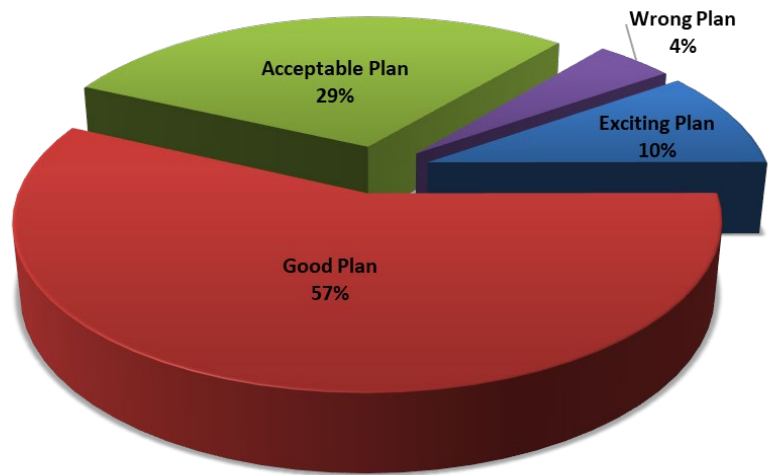
Working in a typical time frame, Horizons has discussed the project with the Sr. Pastor, the Capital Campaign committee, other church leaders and staff, reviewed significant statistical data, and helped lead First Impressions Gatherings (FIGs) involving dozens of leaders and church members. Multiple individuals from several different households were interviewed, and 92 responses to the online surveys were completed by the deadline. Aggregating these combined initiatives (FIGs, interviews and online surveys), gives a strong confidence in the results and thoughts contained in this Feasibility-Readiness Study Report.

It has been a true privilege and honor to observe many of St. Paul's church leaders and attendees who exhibit the core calling of the church. That is, "Inspiring People to Live and Love like Jesus." In an era when church life and deep faith are less central to the community, the nation, and our world, St. Paul's is praying and working to go against that trend by exhibiting a strong desire for impact and growth for the Kingdom of God.

SURVEY RESULTS – 92 TOTAL RESPONSES

1. How do you feel about the proposed Capital Campaign, as described in the Case Statement, to make improvements and upgrades to various areas of the church building at St. Paul's UMC?

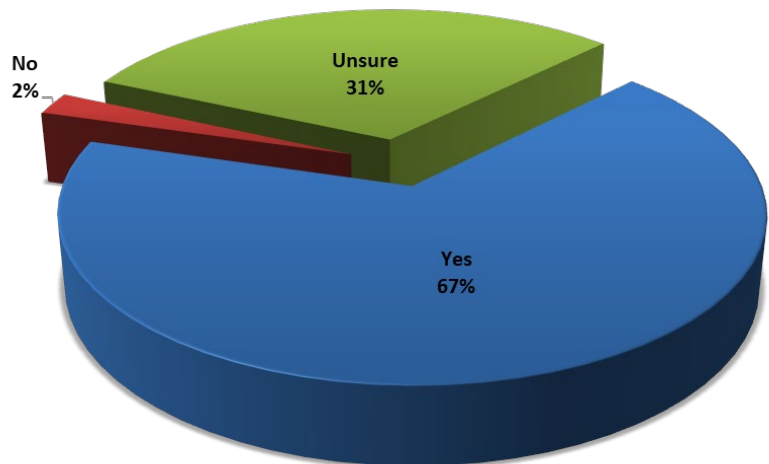
Exciting Plan	9
Good Plan	53
Acceptable Plan	27
Wrong Plan	4



2. Do you believe these proposed building improvements and upgrades will help St. Paul's Church carry out its current and future mission and ministry?

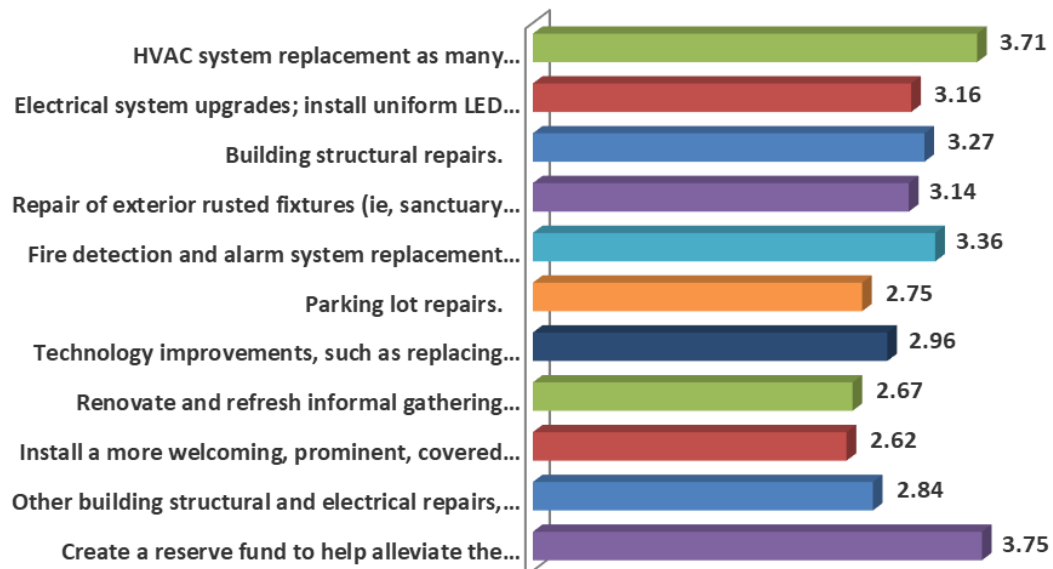
See comments on page 16.

Yes	61
No	2
Unsure	28



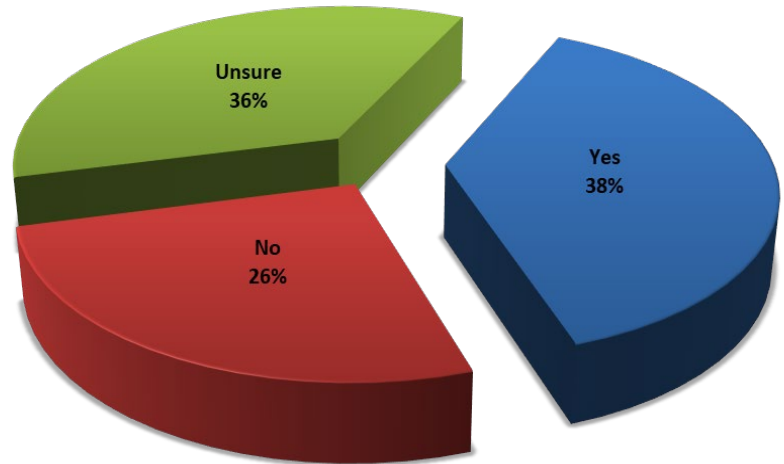
3. In your judgment, how important would each of these capital campaign elements be to enhance the mission and ministry of St. Paul's UMC? We are not asking you to rank these items but to consider each one on its own merits. (4=Very important; 1=Not important at all)

	4 - Very important	3	2	1 - Not important at all	Weighted Average
HVAC system replacement	72	15	6	0	3.71
Electrical system upgrades; install uniform LED lighting	33	42	16	1	3.16
Building structural repairs	51	21	9	9	3.27
Repair of exterior rusted fixtures	33	39	20	0	3.14
Fire detection and alarm system replacement	46	35	9	2	3.36
Parking lot repairs	20	35	29	7	2.75
Technology improvements	28	39	18	7	2.96
Renovate and refresh informal gathering spaces	19	36	25	12	2.67
Install a more welcoming, prominent, covered main entrance	23	27	24	17	2.62
Other building structural and electrical repairs, parking lot repairs	5	6	8	0	2.84
Create a reserve fund	17	1	2	0	3.75



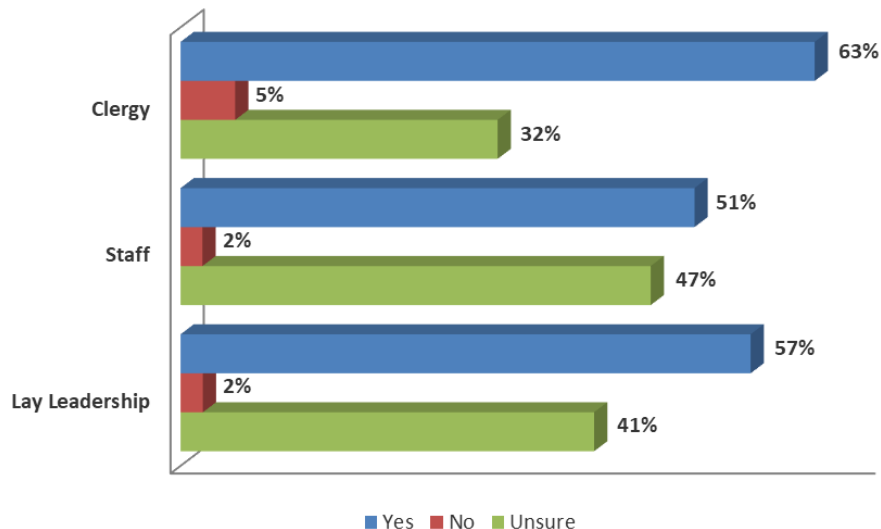
4. Do you believe most active members of the congregation understand the rationale behind the proposed plan for improvements and upgrades to the church building? See comments on page 18.

Yes	35
No	24
Unsure	33



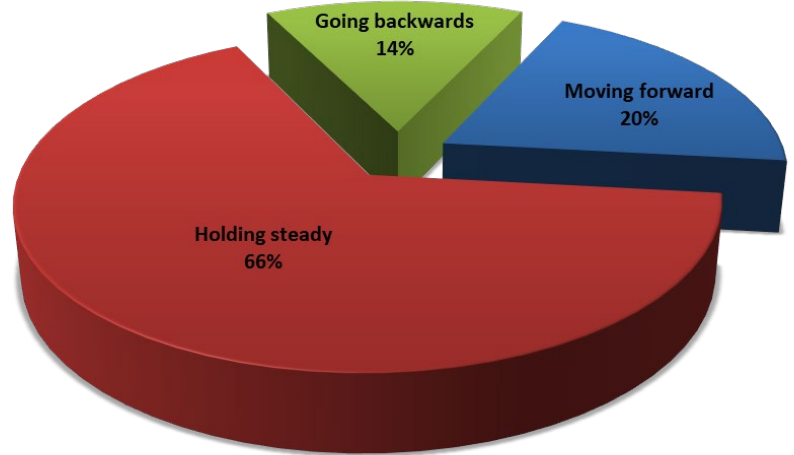
5. Do you feel that your church has the right leadership in place to undertake a capital campaign?

	Yes	No	Unsure
Clergy	58	5	29
Staff	47	2	43
Lay Leadership	51	2	37



6. In your opinion, for the last 12 months, has your church been:

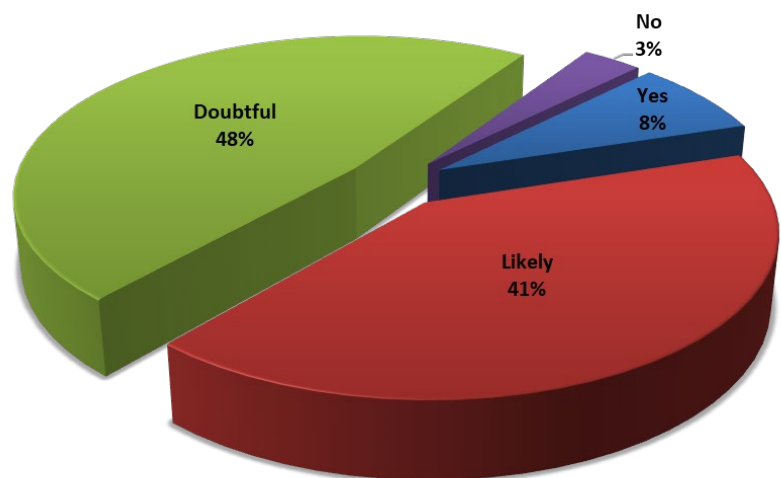
Moving forward	18
Holding steady	60
Going backwards	13



7. Do you believe a three-year campaign could successfully raise \$2,500,000?

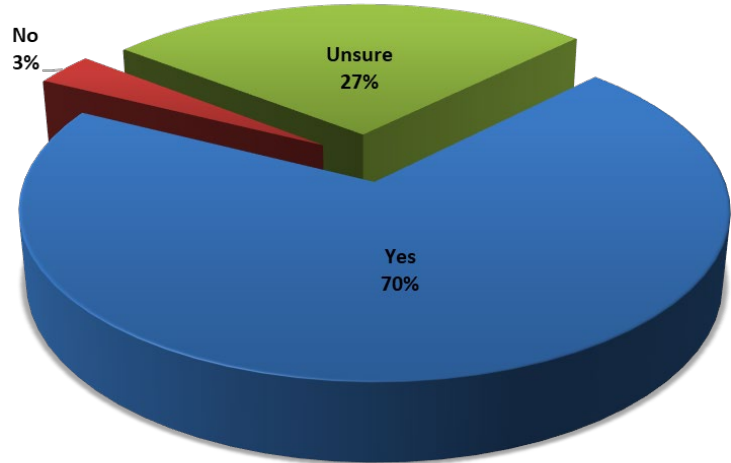
If you answered “Doubtful” or “No,” please specify what you believe is a realistic financial achievement in a three-year capital campaign. See comments on page 20.

Yes	7
Likely	38
Doubtful	44
No	3



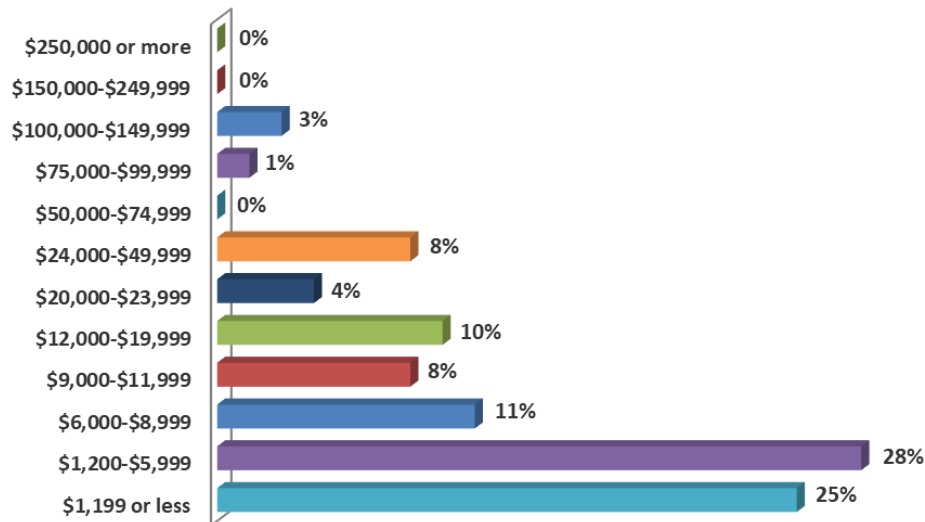
8. If asked, would you be willing to make a three-year financial commitment (over and above your annual giving) to support this effort?

Yes	65
No	3
Unsure	25



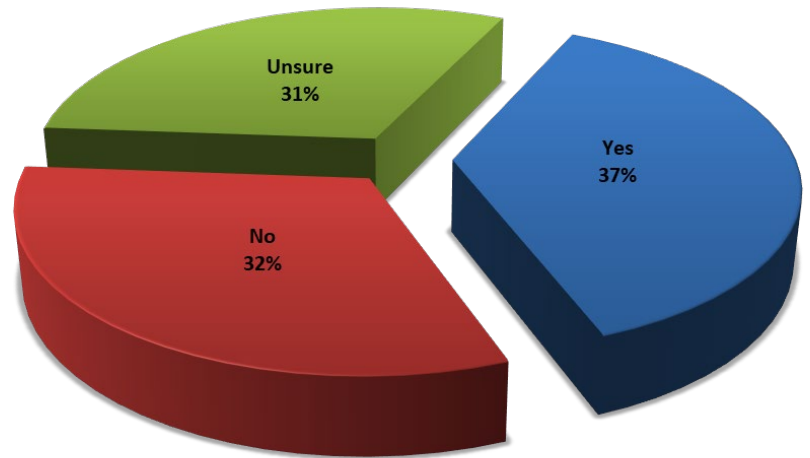
9. What range of giving might you consider for a three-year total financial commitment (over and above your giving to the annual budget)? *This is not a pledge but an initial indicator.*

\$250,000 or more	0	\$20,000-\$23,999	3
\$150,000-\$249,999	0	\$12,000-\$19,999	7
\$100,000-\$149,999	2	\$9,000-\$11,999	6
\$75,000-\$99,999	1	\$6,000-\$8,999	8
\$50,000-\$74,999	0	\$1,200-\$5,999	20
\$24,000-\$49,999	6	\$1,199 or less	18



10. If asked, would you be willing to consider serving in a well-defined and limited role on a committee for this capital campaign, if it did not involve asking people directly for money?

Yes	34
No	29
Unsure	28

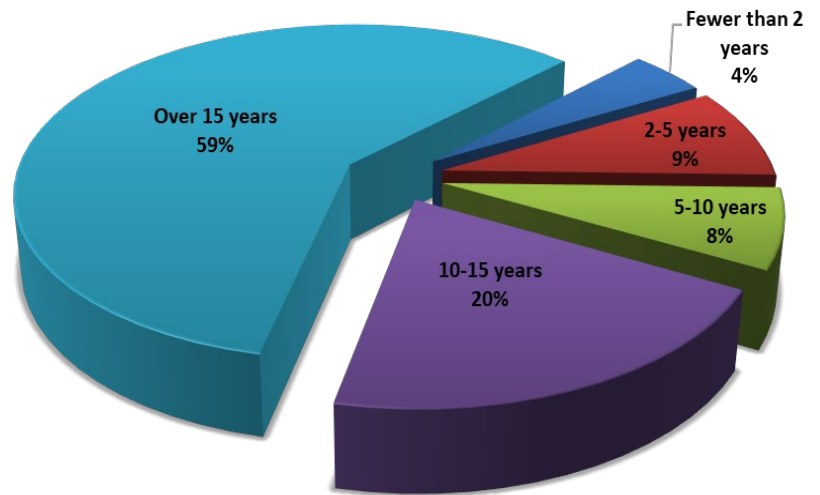


11. Please note any additional comments you think would be helpful for us to know.

See comments on page 23.

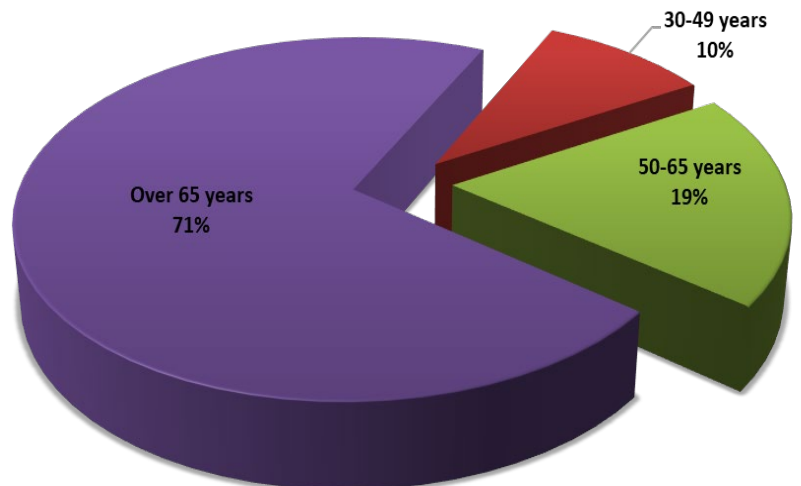
12. How long have you been attending St. Paul's UMC?

Fewer than 2 years	4
2-5 years	8
5-10 years	7
10-15 years	19
Over 15 years	55



13. In which range does your age fall?

Under 30 years	0
30-49 years	9
50-65 years	18
Over 65 years	67



OBSERVATIONS

1. When asked about the plan for facility improvements and upgrades to the St. Paul's UMC facility, a majority of respondents, 62 of 93 respondents, or **67%, indicated this is an "exciting" or "good" plan. Two-thirds responding positively to this list of improvements and upgrades, is to be seen as an affirmation of a desire to care for our facilities.** Of the 27 (29%) who responded to this query "acceptable," most indicated that the plans are necessary, but they are simply not exciting. As one person said, "it's like putting a new roof on my house ... I have to do it, but it does not excite me!"
2. Sixty-seven percent (67%), of respondents indicated these facility improvements and upgrades will help St. Paul's carry out its current and future ministry initiatives. **This is a significant affirmation of the overall impact for these facility upgrades, improvements, and enhancements.**
3. Seventy percent (70%) of those who responded will consider making a gift to support this campaign. Twenty-seven percent (27%) indicated they were unsure, and only 3% indicated "no". Additionally, when asked about the range of gifts that they might make for a campaign to improve and upgrade St. Paul's facilities, **even in this early stage of the process, 74 respondents were willing to indicate a potential financial gift amount.**
4. Three respondents indicated a gift of \$75,000 or more. There was a total of thirteen potential gifts of over \$20,000. **The top 10 potential gifts indicated an approximate value of \$443,000 to \$750,000 (round numbers).**
5. Regarding the eleven potential Capital Campaign elements/initiatives mentioned in the Case Statement (10 focused on the facility, 1 seeking a potential reserve fund), **the six most strongly supported items in the Case are:**
 - a. Create a reserve fund
 - b. HVAC system replacement
 - c. Fire detection and alarm system replacement
 - d. Building structural repairs
 - e. Electrical system upgrades etc. and
 - f. Repair of exterior rusted fixtures.
6. The **least supported ministry initiatives** listed in the Case are:
 - a. Installing a more welcoming, prominent, covered main entrance
 - b. Renovate and refresh informal gathering spaces

Some ministry initiatives (e.g., technology improvements) were not viewed negatively or entirely unnecessary, but, **according to many respondents, need more detail, explanation, rationale, and a sense of impact on current and future ministries.**

This should not surprise nor disappoint, but simply be a call to a deeper and more thorough explanation regarding these components of the project stack.

7. When asked about the church's current leadership, and their place to lead and assist in a capital campaign, a majority responded affirmatively. Sixty-three percent (63%) believe we have the right clergy leadership, 51% believe we have the right staff, and 57% believe St. Paul's has the right lay leadership in place. My interaction with clergy, staff and lay leadership indicates that this is a well-placed confidence. **As we plan the Campaign and secure lay leadership, we will want to be sure to have the "right people in the right places" to position them for success in order to help church constituents develop an even deeper sense of confidence in the lay leadership throughout the church community. A well organized and deeply prayerful capital campaign will emphasize generosity, stewardship and biblical values and can significantly impact the overall faith-climate in a church community, especially when the right Leadership Team members are in place, and are willing to enthusiastically support the Capital Campaign with their time, talents, treasures, and voices.**
8. The inclusion of the question regarding the church "moving forward, holding steady, or going backwards" has taken on a heightened importance since the impact of the 2020, and beyond, pandemic. **The fact that 86% of respondents believe that, in the last 12 months, St. Paul's UMC has been moving forward, or holding steady, is a celebratory affirmation for church leadership....and a moment to pause and thank the Lord.** That a significant portion of those respondents, 66%, believe the church is "holding steady," should not be viewed negatively. In an era of church decline, and in the wake of the United Methodist Church's schism, the fact that many see St. Paul's UMC as holding steady (i.e., firm) should be seen as a place from which to grow and thrive. In almost all interviews, for example, there was an anticipatory mentality of "we have righted the ship and are ready to take some strong next steps." The church, it seems to this strategist, is ready to be led into its next season of ministry and mission. This is not to be taken for granted, and it is, unfortunately, not too common in churches today.
9. Under one-half, 49%, believe the church "yes" will, or "likely" will, be able to raise \$2,500,000, in a three-year capital campaign. However, **only 7 of 92 respondents, 8%, responded "yes" to this query. Overall, 48% express doubt and 3% indicate a clear "no," giving an aggregate negative response of 51%.** This significant lack of confidence in the church's ability to raise \$2,500,000, over three years, is a concerning sign.
10. The question regarding a willingness to serve in the Capital Campaign was quite evenly split, with 37% indicating "yes," 32% indicating "no," and 31% responding "unsure." This is not as positive a response as we would like in a Capital Campaign survey, but not totally unexpected at this point. It does indicate, however, that **we will need to be very strategic and specific in our asks as we recruit** for the leadership and participatory roles in the campaign.

11. It is not a surprise that most of those who responded to the survey have been a part of the St. Paul's UMC family for 10 years or more. Those who have been engaged for the longest periods of time tend to be the most invested in the church, its ministry, and its future. **The other good news at St. Paul's UMC is that 20% of those who responded have been involved for 10 years or less. That these newer members took the time to respond to this survey is a good sign for St. Paul's future.**
12. Most of the people who responded to this survey are in their prime earning years or in the early years of their retirement. This is an encouraging sign for a St. Paul's UMC capital campaign as **people over the age of 50 tend to be among the most generous supporters of churches in the United States.**

Two Anecdotal Observations:

- When I conduct FRS interviews, talk with Annual and Capital Campaign leadership teams, meet people in the church hallways, etc., **I listen carefully for comments which include “we and us” and comments which include “they and them.”** That is, I listen to how deeply people are invested in/feel connected to, the church by how they include, or do not include, themselves in the pronouns they use. **I heard significantly more usage of “they and them” in my conversations with St. Paul's attendees.** As in “they should do something about church attendance,” or “they will have offered more programs to serve the needs of the church Body” etc. I observe a need for St. Paul's to create more opportunities to help church attendees (members and others) feel more connected and empowered to make an impact at St. Paul's UMC. My observation is too many people see church involvement as something “they” should do, and not a “we and us” opportunity.
- Additionally, **there was a thread of conversations which bemoaned an apparent lack of transparency and consistent information for ALL attendees.** That is, I heard, too often, comments about things like “we do not get enough information about our financial status” or “we often feel like we are not on the inside with information,” etc. I am not sure I agree with this perceived lack of transparency and information sharing, but it was a clear thread in many of my conversations. Again, while church leaders may be unsure this is accurate (the lack of information sharing), it is a perception that I witnessed first-hand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Several important elements are in place for a successful capital campaign at St. Paul's UMC.** With 67% of survey respondents indicating that elements listed in the Case project stack will positively impact current and future ministry initiatives at St. Paul's UMC, and nearly 7 of 10 respondents (67%) indicating that the church's plan is excellent or good, I fully believe that St. Paul's UMC can use this spiritual momentum, and current good will, to accomplish a deeply spiritual, and prayerfully led, capital campaign. I highly recommend moving forward with prayer, confidence, and conviction!
2. Based upon the gifts indicated in the survey, and comments made throughout the same, **I believe it is quite reasonable to expect to raise between \$1,250,000 and \$1,500,000 over a three-year period. With the addition of several Lead Gifts, that is, at the \$75,000 range and above, it is not inconceivable that we could go beyond this level of financial support depending on the willingness and commitment of the congregation to engage in this capital campaign as, first and foremost, a prayerful and spiritual journey.** My sense is that as church leadership exhibits openness and transparency in the asks, clear communication in the necessary expenditures, and **a clear list of projects that THIS Campaign will be conducted to address**, the congregation will be moved to support this effort generously, graciously, and gratefully.
3. As indicated above, a financially successful campaign will require a significant number of lead gifts. To raise the current goal of \$2.5 million, **your top 10 gifts will need to total approximately \$1,150,000. Your current top 10 potential gifts equal \$443,000 to \$750,000. Therefore, I recommend setting your financial goal at the \$1,300,000 level.** To meet or exceed your overall financial goal (the St. Paul's original goal, or this recommended one), we will need to cultivate those with lead gift potential and help them understand the importance and motivating factor of these larger gifts. **Our campaign Lead Gifts Team strategy, based upon 2 Chronicles 28-29, is to guide these lead gift prospects into a deeply prayerful and spiritually led journey, and show them the powerful influence their lead gift can have on motivating the entire congregation.**
4. Constant communication and transparency, regarding all matters financial, throughout the campaign and follow-up process will be essential to our spiritual and financial success. Over-communication, and over transparency, should be our standard operating procedure for all matters, campaign and financial. **Even during the ramp-up and preparation phase of the campaign, I strongly urge church leaders to put in place financial transparency processes to ensure all questions/concerns are addressed.** It is not possible to overcommunicate during this preparation time.
5. It will not come as a surprise to church leadership (in any church) that not all attendees are fully onboard with some of the plans. A review of comments within this report will reveal a small, but not insignificant, cadre of negative comments regarding a perceived lack of transparency. This is pointed out not to diminish these comments but to urge

church leaders to listen, consider, and help church members and attendees understand **their voices and views are valued.**

6. For the campaign itself, **I strongly recommend that St. Paul's UMC leaders use their individual and collective voice to overcommunicate the campaign's purposes and intentions, which projects will be central to THIS Campaign, and HOW these facility updates and enhancements will further ministry and mission.** In short, I believe a heavy and consistent dose of truth and transparency will go a long way toward encouraging an authentic spirit of cooperation and community.
7. **This campaign must be about faith and discipleship more than simple fundraising.** It will be important to **invite everyone** who is part of the congregation to participate and to seek God's will for their family as it relates to God's will for the future of St. Paul's UMC. "We are in this together," must resonate throughout the church community as we move through this Capital Campaign.
8. With general concerns and anxiety over the economy, current affairs, the United Methodist schism, etc., **this campaign must, and will, focus on gratitude, prayer, and faith.**
9. Though often thought of as outside the scope of traditional Campaign activities, **I strongly recommend a 2-3 year, church-wide, emphasis on relational building activities** throughout the St. Paul's calendar. In order to address the "they/them" and "us/we" culture I wrote about earlier, AND to create in St. Paul's attendees a sense of belonging and ownership (which IS important to Campaigns), I offer this recommendation not as a "soft skill" but as something to be discussed among church leadership, and given high priority on the church's calendar, over the next 2-3 years. **Involvement leads to investment ... always.**
10. Finally, but not least important, for this Campaign to be highly successful financially, church leadership must do two things with the current project stack in the Case: **first, determine, clearly and soon, a prioritized list of projects for this Campaign**, so the congregation, and Campaign Communications Team, can focus on those projects as front and center. **Second, make clear connections between the facility and our ministry and mission impact and expansion. Connect the dots for people regarding form and function/impact.** Clearly explain, for example, how technology improvements are vital to reaching the next generation, and how enhanced and updated gathering spaces are not merely aesthetic but can provide connecting and community-building opportunities for people in our disconnected society. This hard, and decision-making effort, will be time very well spent.

IN CONCLUSION

Thank you for the privilege of collaborating with the leaders and people of St. Paul's UMC, Rochester Michigan! I am particularly thankful for Sr. Pastor Elbert Dulworth, the support and leadership of Debbie Kelley, Rachel Henry, John McGowen, John Gaber, the faith-full leaders on the Waymakers Annual Campaign, and the many unnamed individuals for their hospitality, assistance with arrangements at the church, and attention to detail throughout this process. I am blessed as I serve alongside you!