

# WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE FSA SPACE SURVEY?

undertaken by Western University geography students

January 15, 2020

## Introduction

**The FSA Planning Committee** would like to thank those who took the time to complete the FSA space questionnaire this last fall. It was designed by the Western University geography students Joy Tigchelaar and Aaron West in consultation with the Planning Committee in order to elicit opinions regarding space utilization in the church. This summary is intended to give a “high level” overview and interpretation of the findings. The actual report contains much detailed information which can be referenced to validate the interpretations provided in this summary.

## Survey Methodology

**Opinion surveys** are useful to determine the perceptions that people have regarding various issues. It is important, however, to round out the picture with objective data. For example, it is interesting to note that the opinions expressed the view that FSA space is underutilized. Many share this view; indeed, this was an assumption made by the Planning Committee. However, we established that there were in fact over 1,000 bookings over a 10-month period - an average of three bookings a day for various church spaces. We also found out that 58% of all room bookings during this period of time were unpaid uses and 42% were paid. This may come as a surprise to some. Is this good? Are we at capacity? Are some spaces underutilized and others not? We have to treat this as a preliminary exploration of space utilization and will need to go deeper into the issues.

**Survey Limitations** - There were some inconsistencies in the findings which may be due to the phrasing of some of the questions. A number of people reported that they found some of the questions difficult to answer. Some reported that they had challenges accessing the on-line survey. Others noted that the timeline for completing the survey was short – this was driven by the length of the student term.

## Survey Findings

A total of 41 people completed the survey, 38 of whom were members of the congregation. Two thirds were women. Respondents came from many parts of the city and even Middlesex County. This probably reflects that many people are willing to go to some effort and travel some distance to attend FSA. Clearly, FSA is not a local community church chosen for convenience by those living close by. The church has great personal significance to many

people. It is a long-term church home for many. Many also value the beautiful sanctuary. With the smaller congregations, however, many feel that we could make better use of the spaces that we have.

Given that there may be different interpretations of the question regarding what is “appropriate” use, the top two were the sanctuary and the atrium. The bottom two were the nursery and the sunroom. One suggestion offered was that the nursery could be turned into a daycare centre. There was no specific indication as to how the sunroom might be used differently. If we consider which spaces could be used more now without any modification, the top contenders are Proudfoot Hall and the adjoining Kitchen, the Upper Youth room and the Eco-meditation garden space.

The Eco-Meditation Garden has not seen much use yet as it has only been a year and the garden has yet to mature. It was designed to be a space for uses such as outdoor services, walking, resting and meditation with the intent of offering a closer connection to the community. Of the respondents, 60% report infrequent to frequent use of the garden and about 95% feel positive or very positive about it.

In terms of the use of FSA space overall and who might use the space, respondents put a priority on it being used by members of the congregation first, followed by other faith groups, then community non-profit groups and lastly for-profit businesses.

If we were to make modifications to our spaces, respondents favoured moderate change to the sanctuary, Proudfoot Hall, the parlour, chapel, atrium, and the Eco-Meditation garden. Respondents favoured major changes to the Proudfoot kitchen, library, sunroom, nursery, rental rooms, fireside rooms and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor space.

The people who answered the survey generally support FSA space being used for missions compatible with FSA such as education, performances, art exhibitions, weddings and not-for-profit uses. Respondents did not support the space being used for purposes not related to our primary purpose including such things as a brewery, climbing gym, exercise, escape room, laser tag, options which were included in the survey.

Given the opportunity to provide final comments a number of respondents provided caveats to the effect that when we consider change, we have to keep in mind feasibility and limitations such as time, space, zoning, costs of maintenance and upkeep, and above all the need for financial self-sufficiency.

## **Conclusion**

This survey and the related data collected and analyzed by the Western University students was an important first step in a multi-stage process that will allow FSA to discern how to best adapt our church building to meet the needs and demands of the future.

Thank you again and we will keep you informed of any further actions regarding space utilization.

*Barrie Evans, on behalf of the Planning Committee*

**The full report and presentation slides can be found on the FSA web site.**