

CHURCH MINISTRY ANALYSIS

First Church

A Comprehensive Health Assessment

REPORT YEAR
2026

PREPARED BY
Scott Ball

REPORT DATE
September 27, 2026

OVERALL HEALTH SCORE

51/**100**

Moderately Unhealthy

Survey Demographics

Based on 15 survey responses

Are you a member of this church?



How long have you been attending this church (on-line or in-person)?



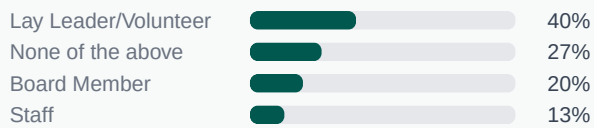
Did you give regularly to this church during the last year?



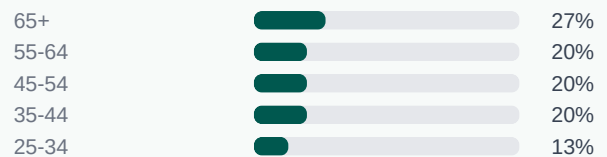
On average, how often do you attend worship services (in-person or online)?



What is your current position in the church?



What is your current age bracket?



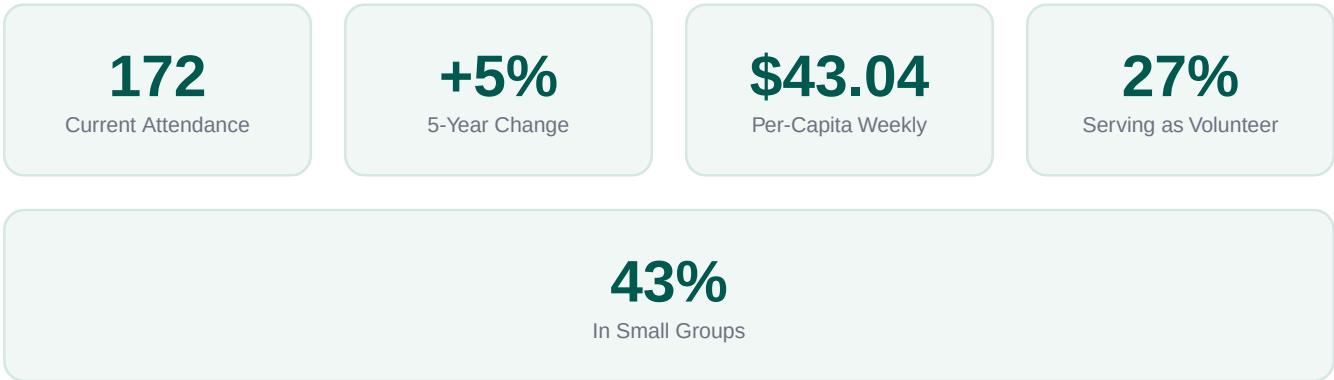
Executive Summary

A snapshot of your church's overall health and vitality

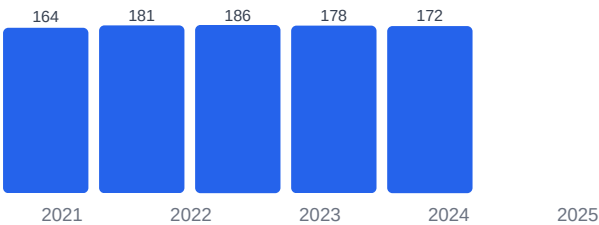
First Church is navigating a genuinely hopeful season, and this report is offered in that spirit, as an honest, caring look at where things stand and what the road ahead might hold. With an overall health score of **51/100**, the congregation falls in the moderately unhealthy range, reflecting the real weight of the past few years while also pointing to meaningful areas of strength that your new pastor and leadership team can build upon. Engagement metrics tell a similar story: volunteer participation sits at **27%** and group involvement at **43%**, both below the recommended benchmarks of 50% and 60% respectively, and per-capita giving of **\$43.04 per week** trails the U.S. average of \$53, suggesting that deeper connection and renewed vision could meaningfully move the needle in all three areas. The survey findings reflect a congregation that cares deeply about First Church, is hungry for clarity and direction, and is ready to move forward, and this report is designed to help your leadership do exactly that.

Growth & Engagement

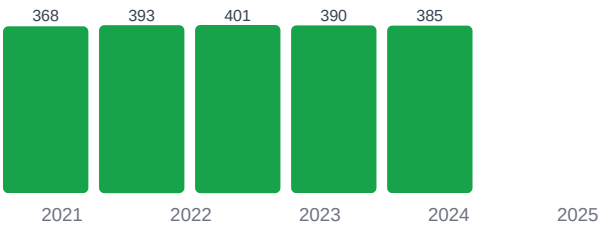
Five-year data on attendance, giving, and community participation



5-Year Attendance



5-Year Giving (\$k)



Attendance Analysis

First Church's attendance picture tells a story of resilience mixed with real cause for reflection. Over the past five years, weekly attendance has grown by just 5%, with current Sunday worship averaging 172 people. While any growth is encouraging, particularly given the significant disruption the congregation experienced following the pastoral transition in 2023, that modest trajectory points to a church that has stabilized rather than one that is truly gaining momentum. Group participation sits at 43%, meaningfully below the 60% engagement benchmark that healthy churches typically maintain, and the volunteer rate of 27% falls well short of the 50% minimum threshold considered standard for a congregation of this size and makeup. Per-capita giving of \$43.04 per week also trails the U.S. benchmark of \$53.00 per week per person, and with annual giving of \$384,920 reflecting only a 4% increase over five years, financial growth has largely kept pace with attendance rather than outpacing it. Taken together, these metrics suggest a congregation that has found its footing but has not yet rediscovered its stride.

What makes these numbers worth sitting with carefully is the broader context they represent. First Church has navigated a genuinely painful season, and the fact that it held together relationally and financially through that period is not a small thing. At the same time, the data reflects what many members seem to sense but may find hard to name: the church is in a holding pattern. Comments from the congregation point to limited on-ramps for connection, a nursery and children's wing that may not be fully competitive in a growing Dallas suburb, and very few clear next steps for someone who shows up on a Sunday morning. When people cannot easily find a group, a place to serve, or a sense of direction, attendance tends to plateau even in communities full of genuine warmth and good intention. The arrival of a new senior pastor in early 2025 represents a real and timely opportunity to address these dynamics, and the slight uptick in attendance and giving, however modest, suggests the congregation is ready to respond to renewed clarity and vision.

Giving Analysis

First Church's financial picture reflects a congregation that has weathered genuine difficulty and held together with admirable resilience. Annual giving in 2025 reached \$384,920, representing a 4% increase over the past five years, which is encouraging on the surface. However, when measured against the US benchmark of \$53 per person per week, the per-capita giving of \$43.04 at First Church tells a more sobering story. That gap of nearly \$10 per person each week, across a congregation of this size, represents a meaningful shortfall in generosity capacity. Combined with a volunteer rate of 27% against a recommended minimum of 50%, and group participation at 43% against a 60% benchmark, the financial data does not stand alone; it is part of a broader pattern of engagement that has not yet returned to healthy levels following the disruption of 2023.

What these numbers likely reflect is not a congregation lacking in care or commitment, but one that is still finding its footing after a painful season. Several survey participants noted that giving seemed to dip after COVID, and the pastoral transition of 2023 almost certainly compounded that trend. Generosity in a local church tends to follow trust, vision, and a sense of shared momentum, and First Church is still in the early stages of rebuilding all three under new pastoral leadership. The stability of giving through such a difficult period actually speaks well of the congregation's loyalty and faithfulness. As clarity of vision grows and more people find meaningful connection through groups and serving, there is every reason to expect that giving will follow. The financial foundation is not broken; it simply needs the same renewal that the rest of First Church's ministry life is beginning to experience.

Community Life

Community life at First Church tells a story that deserves both honest attention and genuine hope. With a group participation rate of 43%, the church currently falls below the 60% benchmark that research consistently identifies as a threshold for meaningful congregational connection. In practical terms, that figure represents roughly 74 people out of an average Sunday attendance of 172 who are engaged in a small group setting. That leaves well over half of the people who gather each week without a structured relational environment in which to grow, be known, and be supported. Survey voices reflect this reality plainly: some members searched for nearly a year before finding a group, others expressed uncertainty about how to take a next step after Sunday morning, and a number of newcomers shared that connection felt largely out of reach. These are not complaints without merit; they are signals that First Church's relational infrastructure has not yet caught up with its genuine warmth and care.

Group life is not simply a program feature for a healthy church; it is the connective tissue that holds discipleship, accountability, and belonging together. For First Church, strengthening this area has the potential to produce a ripple effect across nearly every other dimension of congregational health. When people are genuinely connected, volunteer rates tend to rise, giving tends to stabilize, and the sense of forward momentum that the congregation so clearly longs for begins to feel attainable. The current pastor's arrival in early 2025 creates a timely window to cast fresh vision for what group life at First Church could look like, particularly for the young families and newer attenders who are still discerning whether this community is truly home for them. With six active adult small groups already in place, the foundation is not absent; it simply needs intentional expansion, clearer on-ramps, and a culture that actively invites rather than waits to be asked.

Volunteer Engagement

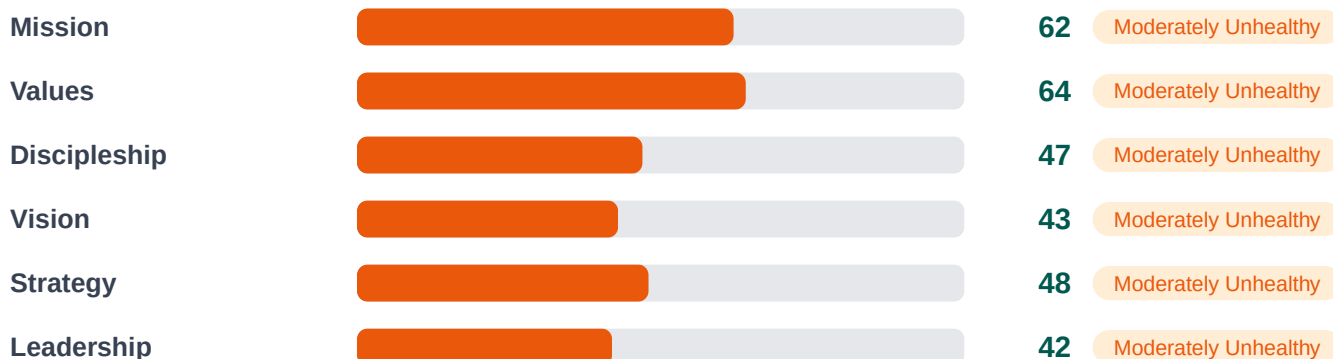
One of the more pressing realities surfacing in First Church's health data is the volunteer rate of just 27/100, which falls significantly short of the 50% benchmark that healthy churches typically maintain. With roughly 60 to 70 active volunteers serving a congregation where 225 to 250 people consider First Church their primary church home, the weight of ministry is resting on a relatively small group of individuals. Several voices in the survey reflected this dynamic directly, noting that staff tend to carry responsibilities on their own and that no one ever personally invited them to serve. When the invitation to contribute never comes, many willing people simply remain on the sidelines, not out of indifference, but because no clear on-ramp was ever extended to them. The absence of volunteer job descriptions, structured training, and meaningful check-ins compounds the problem, making it difficult to develop a culture where serving feels accessible, purposeful, and sustainable for the long term.

What makes this worth careful attention at First Church is the deeper connection between serving and spiritual ownership. Research and pastoral experience consistently affirm that people who serve tend to grow faster, give more generously, and stay more committed to the life of a local church. It is worth noting that First Church's per-capita giving of \$43.04 per week also trails the U.S. benchmark of \$53 per week, and low volunteer engagement is rarely unrelated to that kind of gap. When members move from attending to contributing, something shifts in how they relate to the church's mission. Given the season First Church has walked through, rebuilding that sense of shared ownership among a broader base of people is not simply a staffing strategy; it is a pastoral one. Helping more people find a meaningful place to serve is one of the most effective ways to renew congregational health from the inside out, and it represents one of the most hopeful opportunities available to the church's new leadership right now.

AT A GLANCE

Ministry Health Scores

Six pillars of long-term church vitality



How to Read These Scores

Healthy 86–100

Moderately Healthy 66–85

Moderately Unhealthy 41–65

Unhealthy 0–40

Six Pillars of Church Health

An assessment of the core areas that drive long-term church vitality

Mission

62/100

Moderately Unhealthy

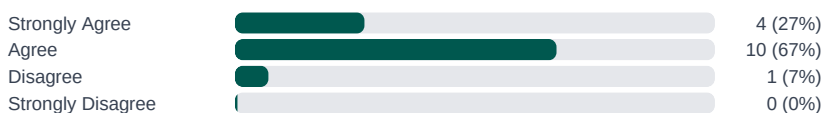
First Church's mission and Great Commission clarity lands at **62/100**, placing it in the moderately unhealthy range, though the picture here is more nuanced than a single number can convey. On the encouraging side, survey respondents affirmed that the pastor weaves the mission into his preaching with meaningful regularity, and many members recognized that the church does carry a genuine heart for caring well for one another. The mission statement itself has some visibility, appearing in printed materials week to week. Where the score begins to slide, however, is in the gap between the mission being stated and the mission being lived. Respondents reflected a much lower confidence that the Great Commission is actually shaping how First Church makes decisions, allocates energy, or orients its ministries toward the community beyond its own walls. That distinction matters deeply: a church can display its mission prominently and still not be functionally guided by it, and that appears to be the tension First Church is navigating right now.

What emerges from the open-ended responses connected to this pillar is a congregation that senses the mission exists somewhere above them but hasn't quite landed in the everyday life of the church. Several voices noted, with genuine candor, that First Church excels at caring for people already inside the building while the work of reaching new people feels underdeveloped or even absent. There's a real warmth in this congregation, and people value that deeply. But a quiet longing surfaces in the comments as well: a desire for that same warmth to have direction, to be channeled outward with intention. Some respondents observed that ministry decisions tend to be made on the basis of tradition rather than mission, and that the Great Commission rarely surfaces in the spaces where real decisions get made. That observation deserves pastoral attention, because it suggests the mission of First Church, as rich as its history is, may not yet be functioning as the filter through which ministry life is evaluated and shaped. The good news is that the congregation appears ready and willing to be led somewhere, and that posture is a genuine gift for a church in this season.

Survey Response Data

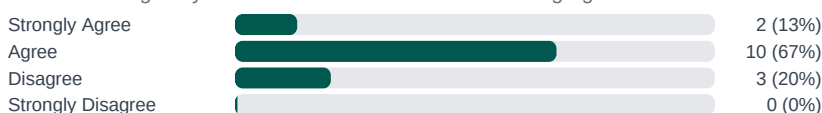
Q9

The church has a clear mission statement.



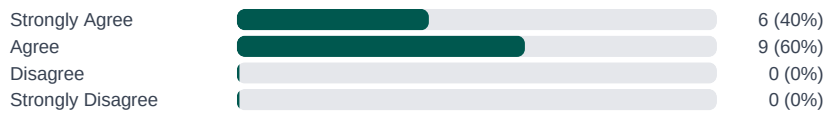
Q10

The church regularly communicates its mission to the congregation.



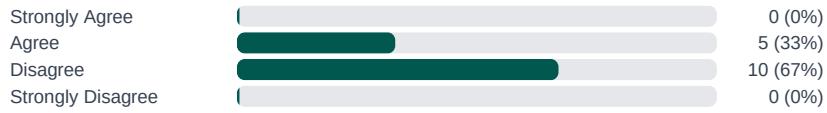
Q11

The church's mission statement is in alignment with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).



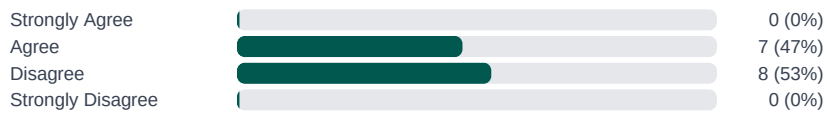
Q12

The church consistently uses its mission statement as a tool in decision-making.



Q13

The church is successful in living out its stated mission.



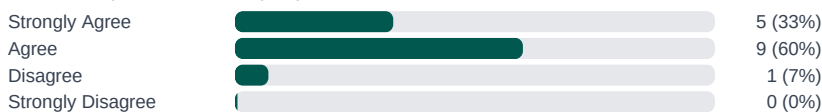
First Church's Core Values score of 64/100 places the congregation in the moderately unhealthy range, though that number carries more nuance than it might first appear. Among the survey items connected to this pillar, the congregation's strongest affirmations centered on the quality and depth of the Bible teaching from the pulpit, the warmth of small group relationships, and the pastoral care members extend to one another. These are genuine and meaningful strengths. Where the scores dipped was in areas tied to outreach and evangelism, the ability to evaluate and steward ministry programs effectively, and the degree to which the church's stated values actually shape day-to-day decisions. There is a pattern worth naming here: First Church scores better on values it holds internally than on values it expresses externally. The congregation feels cared for and spiritually fed, but there is a recognized gap between what the church says it stands for and how that translates into missional action and ministry accountability.

The open-ended comments connected to this pillar tell a story that is both encouraging and honest. Multiple voices expressed genuine gratitude for the preaching, describing it as a primary reason their families have remained at First Church through a difficult season. Small groups were spoken of with real affection, with several people describing those relationships as deeply formative. But alongside that warmth, a candid convergence emerged around two quiet tensions. First, many people acknowledged that they do not know how to share their faith naturally and would welcome training to help close that gap. Second, several respondents noted that some ministries at First Church seem to continue more out of relational loyalty than genuine fruitfulness, and that programs are rarely evaluated against any clear standard. This is not a congregation lacking heart; it is a congregation that has been through a great deal and has prioritized stability and care, understandably so. What the comments suggest, taken together, is that First Church is ready to be challenged toward a more courageous, outward-facing expression of the values it already holds, if given a clear and safe path to do so.

Survey Response Data

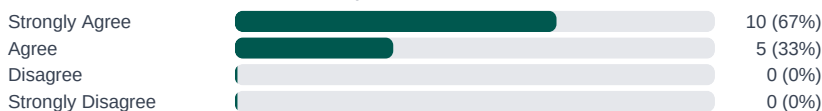
Q14

Our worship services lead people to live in awe and obedience to Jesus.



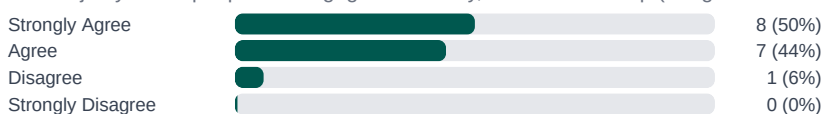
Q15

Our church teaches the Bible in a way that leads to life transformation.



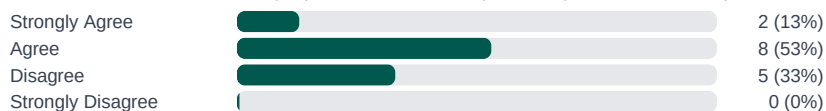
Q16

The majority of our people are engaged in healthy, biblical fellowship (living out the one-another commands of the New Testament).



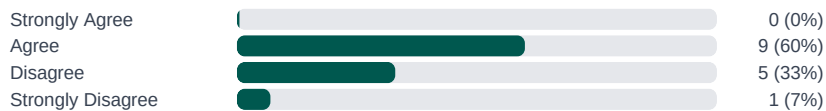
Q17

Church members are led to pray for one another specifically and intentionally.



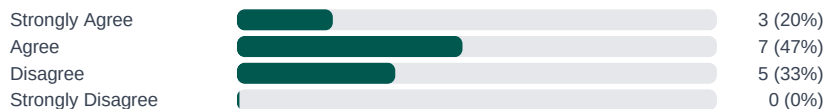
Q18

The majority of our people are regularly volunteering in a church ministry.



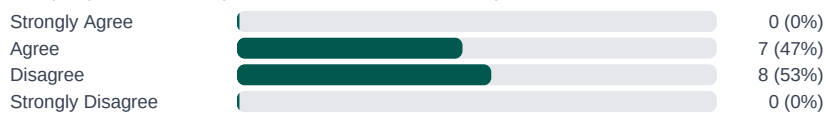
Q19

Our people support the church generously with their finances.



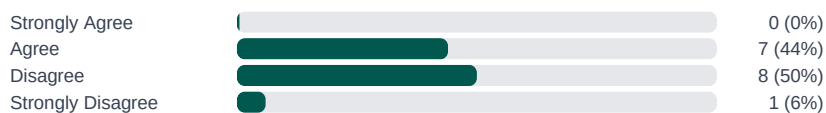
Q20

Our people consistently share their faith in their daily lives with non-believers outside the walls of the church.



Q21

The church is more concerned with the effectiveness of ministries than adherence to traditions.



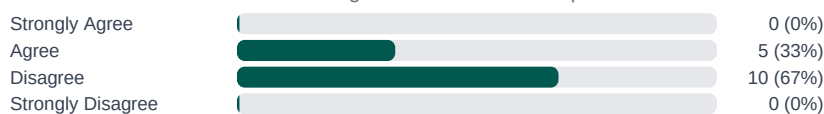
The Discipleship Pathway pillar represents one of the more pressing areas of concern for First Church, landing at 47/100, which places it in the **Moderately Unhealthy** range. Within the survey responses connected to this pillar, there were some genuine bright spots worth acknowledging: the church's children's ministry and Sunday morning worship continue to be recognized as points of strength, and there is clearly a warm relational culture among those who have found their way into small groups. However, the survey also surfaces real gaps in how First Church guides people from initial attendance into deeper participation. Items related to clear next steps after Sunday morning, intentional outreach and follow-up, and the coordination of ministries around a shared discipleship pathway all scored notably low. The picture that emerges is of a church with meaningful ministry happening in pockets, but without a unified, accessible path that connects Sunday worship, community groups, serving, and outreach in a way that people can actually follow.

What makes the open-ended comments especially worth sitting with is how consistently they point to the same experience: people at First Church often feel like they have to figure things out on their own. Several voices described waiting a long time to find a group, never being personally invited to serve, and leaving Sunday mornings uncertain about what the next step was. There is also a recurring sense that individual ministries operate in their own lanes, without a common thread connecting them to a larger discipleship vision. The fall festival was cited as a well-loved event, but more than one person noted that nothing follows it, which captures a broader pattern: the church creates meaningful moments without building the bridges that help people go deeper. At the same time, there is unmistakable longing here. These comments are not cynical; they come from people who want to be engaged, want to grow, and are genuinely hoping First Church will give them a clearer on-ramp. That hunger is itself a gift, and it points to real readiness within the congregation for the kind of intentional discipleship structure that First Church has not yet fully built.

Survey Response Data

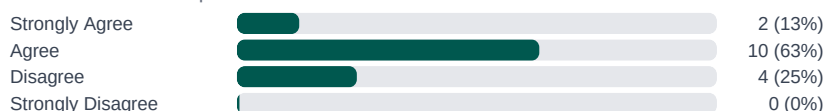
Q22

All of the church's ministries work together in an intentional process to make and mature disciples.



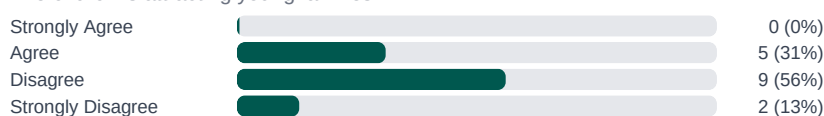
Q23

The church's worship services are vibrant and attractive to newcomers.



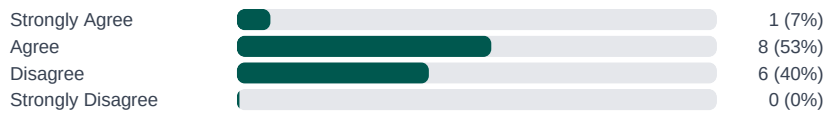
Q24

The church is attracting young families.



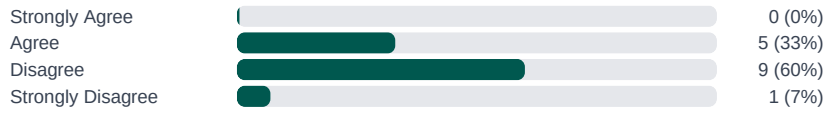
Q25

The church has a clear system for connecting people into groups or classes.



Q26

The church has an effective system for recruiting and launching volunteers based on their area of giftedness.



Q27

The church has a streamlined and intentional strategy for reaching the community.



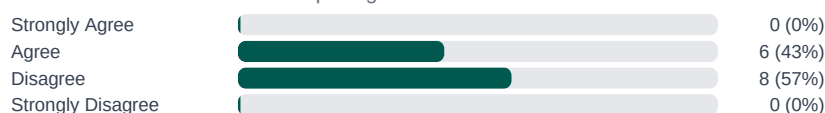
Among all the areas assessed at First Church, Vision is the one that surfaces the most urgent need for attention, landing at 43/100, which places it in the **Moderately Unhealthy** range. When members were asked about the church's sense of direction, the responses revealed a congregation that genuinely wants to believe in where First Church is headed, but is struggling to see a clearly articulated path forward. The one encouraging note was that a number of respondents acknowledged some recent courageous decision-making from leadership, suggesting that trust in pastoral courage is not entirely absent. However, that glimmer of confidence is significantly overshadowed by widespread uncertainty about the future. Responses related to goal-setting and five-year direction were among the weakest in this pillar, indicating that whatever vision may exist in leadership's hearts has not yet been translated into something the congregation can see, hold onto, or rally around. First Church is not a church without hope; it is a church whose hope needs a clearer destination.

The open-ended comments connected to this pillar are telling in their convergence. Several voices expressed, in different ways, the same core longing: they want to know where First Church is going. Members described never having seen goals or numerical milestones shared openly with the congregation, which creates a quiet disorientation, especially for those who genuinely want to invest themselves in the church's future. There is also a recurring observation about how pushback from a small number of long-standing members has at times caused leadership to recalibrate or retreat, and that pattern has not gone unnoticed. People are watching, and what they see shapes their confidence in the church's ability to move forward with conviction. At the same time, the comments are not without grace; the acknowledgment that leaders have made some brave choices recently reflects a congregation that is hopeful and willing to be led. The tension here is real but not irreparable. First Church's people are not disengaged; they are waiting, and they are hoping that someone will give them something worth waiting for.

Survey Response Data

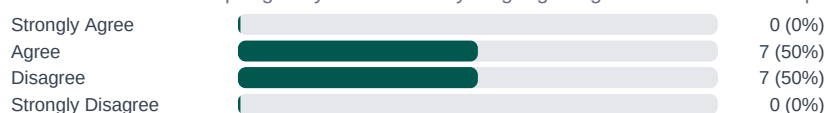
Q28

The church has a clear and compelling vision for the future.



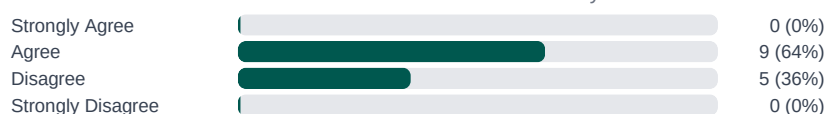
Q29

The church's leadership regularly uses visionary language to guide the church in a specific direction.



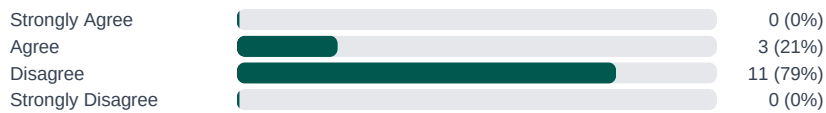
Q30

The church's vision is focused outward towards the community.



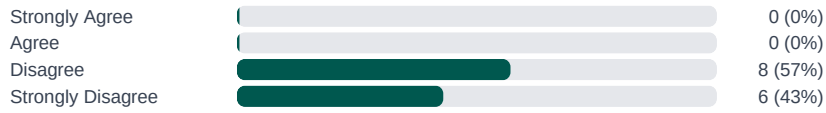
Q31

Church leadership has identified specific changes (like internal culture shifts) that need to take place to accomplish its vision.



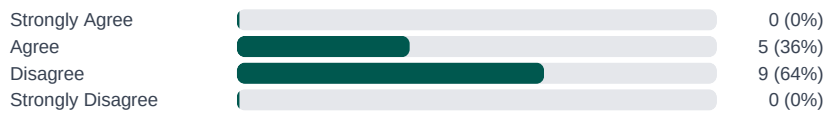
Q32

The church has a dashboard for success which includes specific, measurable goals.



Q33

Our leaders pursue positive change even when there is vocal opposition.



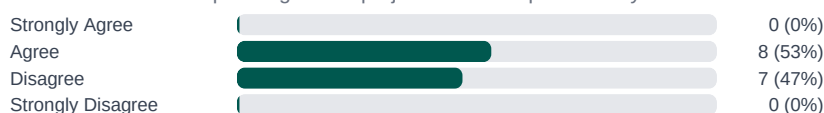
First Church's Strategy pillar lands at 48/100, placing it in the moderately unhealthy range, and the survey results help explain why. When respondents were asked about the church's outward-facing presence and ministry infrastructure, the responses were candid and consistent. There is a genuine appreciation for the warmth and cleanliness of the physical space, but members flagged that the facility's signage creates unnecessary confusion for anyone walking in for the first time, which is a quiet but significant barrier for guests. Concerns about the church's digital presence surfaced repeatedly as well, with the website described as outdated and social media engagement as unpredictable. Perhaps most telling is the observation that First Church has developed a pattern of adding ministry programs without ever retiring those that have run their course. That tendency toward accumulation, rather than pruning, points to a church that may be spreading its capacity thin across too many initiatives rather than investing strategically in what matters most.

What the open-ended comments reveal is a congregation that sees the gap between First Church's potential and its current presentation to the outside world. Several voices noted that the children's wing needs attention, and given that young families are a natural growth demographic in a growing Dallas suburb, that observation carries real weight. There is also an undercurrent of frustration about a church that, in the words of several respondents, tends to add things without ever stepping back to ask whether those things are still working. The congregation is not being critical for its own sake; they are expressing a longing for First Church to operate with more intention, more focus, and a clearer sense of what it is actually trying to accomplish and for whom. There is real energy here waiting to be channeled. With a new pastor now leading the church, this may be exactly the right moment to do a careful, honest audit of how First Church presents itself, both inside the building and beyond it, and to make some courageous decisions about what to keep, what to improve, and what to graciously set aside.

Survey Response Data

Q34

The church outlines specific goals or projects to accomplish each year.



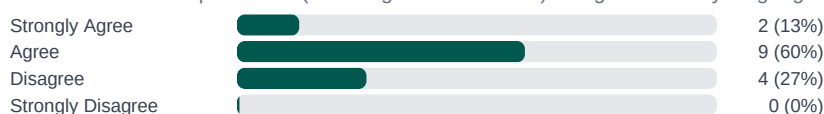
Q35

The church has a low-commitment step, like a newcomer event, to help guests connect in community.



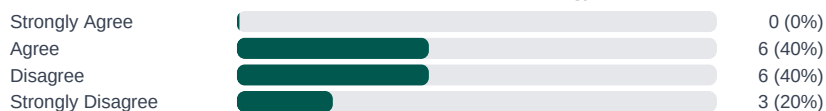
Q36

The church's worship services (including online services) use guest-friendly language.



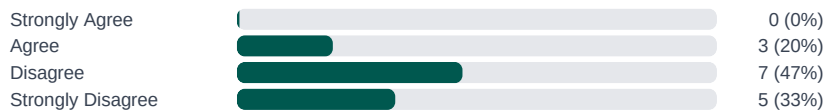
Q37

The church has an effective external communications strategy that builds awareness in the community.



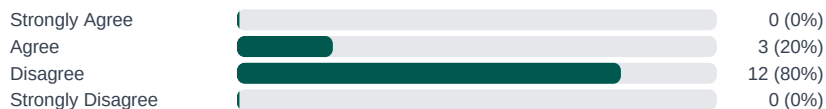
Q38

The church has a clear process for evaluating and streamlining adult discipleship ministries.



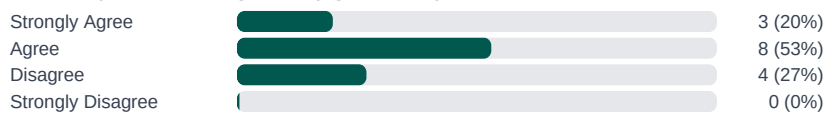
Q39

The church is known in the community for having excellent ministries for children and students.



Q40

Our facility is clean and genuinely guest-ready.



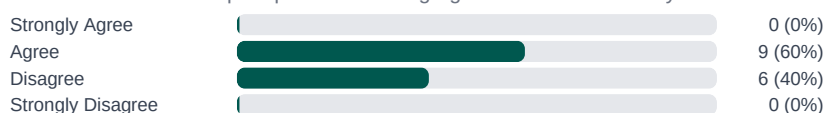
Leadership at First Church scores 42/100, placing it in the moderately unhealthy range, and it represents one of the most pressing areas of concern surfaced by this assessment. Survey responses suggest that where the church shows some strength is in the visible dedication of its current leaders, people who have clearly given years of faithful service. Yet the lowest-scoring themes reveal a significant structural gap: there is little evidence of a functioning leadership pipeline, no clearly communicated pathway for emerging leaders, and limited infrastructure to support the volunteers who are already serving. The concern is not simply that leadership development is underdeveloped, it is that the current model appears to concentrate responsibility in a small, long-tenured group without intentional systems to broaden or replenish that base. First Church has loyal people willing to lead, but without defined roles, training rhythms, or a shared picture of what healthy leadership looks like, that willingness has nowhere structured to go.

What makes the comments from First Church members especially striking is how consistent they are. Voice after voice describes the same experience: years of faithful service without a single check-in, no job description, no training, and no clear sense of how to grow into greater responsibility. Several people noted that they had to initiate their own involvement rather than being invited, and more than one expressed that offering feedback to leadership feels risky rather than welcome. There is a quiet longing underneath these responses, not frustration with the people leading, but a genuine desire to be developed, trusted, and brought further in. The convergence of these themes points to a culture where leadership has functioned more as a role people occupy than a capacity the church actively cultivates. For a congregation in a season of renewal under new pastoral leadership, this is actually an encouraging discovery: the hunger for structure, clarity, and investment is already present in the pews. First Church does not need to create that desire; it simply needs to build the systems that honor it.

Survey Response Data

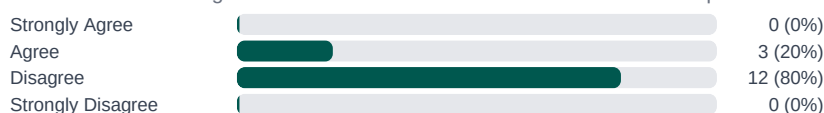
Q41

The staff and leadership empowers the congregation to do the ministry.



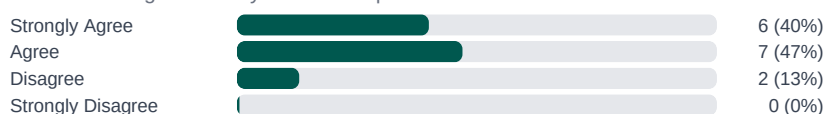
Q42

The church has an organizational chart that extends from senior leadership to frontline volunteers.



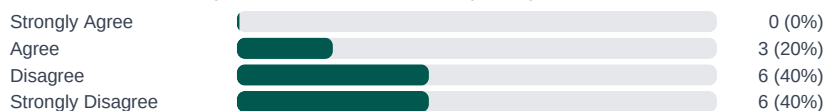
Q43

The church is governed by a board of qualified leaders.



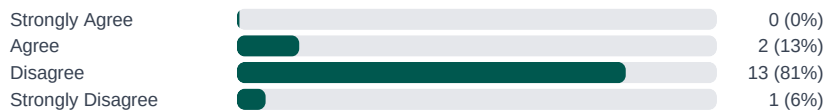
Q44

The church has clearly articulated core leadership competencies for each level of leadership.



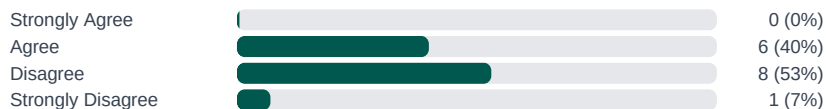
Q45

The church has a reliable system for developing more and better leaders.



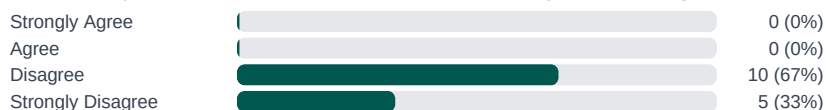
Q46

The church has written job descriptions for staff and volunteer positions.



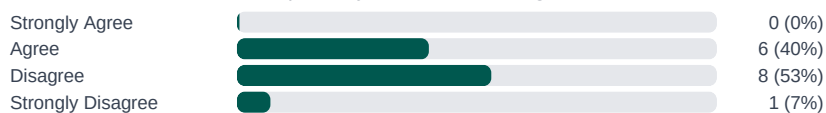
Q47

The church provides formal evaluation for leaders at every level on a regular basis.



Q48

The church's senior leadership has systems for receiving honest feedback.



Q49

Each member of the church staff has no more than eight direct reports (paid staff or volunteers).



Q50

The church provides regular, on-going training for staff and volunteers.



Next Steps & Recommendations

Actionable recommendations to enhance your church's health and effectiveness

Based on the survey findings and engagement data, here are the key recommendations for First Church as you move forward into this new season of ministry:

- 1. Establish a clear discipleship pathway as your most urgent structural priority.** With a Discipleship Pathway score of 47/100 and a group participation rate of just 43% (well below the 60% engagement benchmark), many people at First Church are sitting in seats on Sunday with no clear next step. Members have shared that it took months to find a group, that no one invited them to serve, and that ministries feel disconnected from one another. The work of defining how someone moves from a first Sunday to a small group to a place of service is not a program addition; it is the connective tissue your church needs. The Strategic Envisioning process uses a simple framework of Gather, Build, and Send that can give First Church a shared language for this journey and bring your ministries into alignment around it.
- 2. Develop a leadership pipeline before the leadership gap widens further.** A Leadership score of 42/100 reflects something the congregation has named directly: the same leaders have served for 15 years, there is no defined path to leadership, volunteers lack job descriptions or evaluations, and staff tend to absorb responsibilities rather than distribute them. With only 27% of your congregation volunteering (well below the 50% benchmark), First Church is running on a small engine. Investing in a formal process for identifying, developing, and deploying leaders at every level will not only relieve pressure on your staff and elder board; it will multiply your ministry capacity for years to come. The Leadership Pipeline process developed by The Malphurs Group speaks directly to this need and may be worth exploring as a next step.
- 3. Prioritize vision clarity and communicate it consistently to the congregation.** First Church's Vision score of 43/100 tells a story that members confirmed in their own words: most people do not know where the church is headed in the next five years, goals are rarely shared publicly, and when pushback comes from longtime members, decisions sometimes stall. Your current pastor has shown early signs of vision leadership, and that momentum is worth building on. A structured process for developing and articulating a compelling, God-honoring vision, one that answers where First Church is going and how it will get there, would give the congregation something to rally around. The Strategic Envisioning process is designed precisely for this moment in a church's life.
- 4. Audit and streamline your ministry portfolio with honest evaluation.** Several survey respondents noted that programs continue simply because stopping them would hurt someone's feelings, that things are added but never removed, and that ministries operate in silos. With a Strategy score of 48/100, First Church would benefit from a candid, gracious review of which ministries are bearing fruit and which are consuming energy without advancing the mission. This is not about cutting people; it is about stewarding the resources, time, and volunteer capacity that First Church has. Fewer, better-resourced ministries will serve your congregation far more effectively than a crowded calendar.
- 5. Invest in your physical and digital first impressions to support outreach.** Survey respondents pointed out that the website is outdated, signage is confusing for first-time guests, the children's wing needs attention, and social media is inconsistent. For a church in a growing suburb of Dallas with real potential for reaching young families, these details matter. A newcomer who cannot navigate your building or cannot find basic information

online may not return for a second visit. A modest, focused investment in these areas sends a message that First Church is ready to welcome the next generation of members.

6. **Create simple, accessible feedback and communication channels between the congregation and leadership.** One of the more quietly significant comments in the survey was from a member who said they did not know how to give feedback to leadership without it feeling like complaining. That kind of relational distance, if left unaddressed, gradually erodes trust. As First Church rebuilds after a painful chapter, cultivating a culture where people feel genuinely heard, whether through town halls, regular elder updates, or simple one-on-one conversations with ministry leaders, will strengthen the sense of unity and shared ownership that healthy churches depend on.