



## FAIRFAX UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

10300 Stratford Ave.

Fairfax, VA 22030

[www.fairfaxumc.org](http://www.fairfaxumc.org)



**MISSION**



**WORSHIP**



**LEARNING**

## STRATEGIC PLAN June 2016



# The Preferred Future of Fairfax United Methodist Church

Fairfax United Methodist Church 2016: Strategic Plan

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## FUMC GOAL

To reconnect with our community through a significant strategic plan that creates a faithful, preferred future. This is our best response to fulfill the mission of every United Methodist Church “to make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” - Book of Discipline 2012/16

## FUMC STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2016 Strategic Planning Team has identified three strategic pillars to guide our church into the next phase of our preferred future:

- **WORSHIP**
- **MISSION**
- **LEARNING**

We arrived at these directions after sustained prayer and reflection. Data analysis of attendance and growth patterns, gathering input from our congregation, learning from other churches in the region, and studying current research regarding effective planning and strategies to gain lasting impact in today’s culture were all included in the process.

## Our Current Situation and Our Purpose

We care about the future of our church and trust that God will continue to speak and act through the people of Fairfax United Methodist Church. Data and research reveals:

- Worship attendance is currently at 57 percent of the numbers recorded in 1997.
- Sunday School attendance is currently at 43 percent of the numbers recorded in 2002.
- Confirmation participants gradually dropped from 26 in 1999 to 5 in 2015.
- Profession of Faith members received gradually dropped from 24 in 2000 to 5 in 2015. (See *Appendices A- D*)
- Our community has changed significantly over the last 15-20 years. *Appendix E* has information regarding school racial diversity. This is a direct snap shot of the families moving into the parish area of FUMC.
- A recent survey of FUMC staff and leaders indicated the vast majority believe FUMC is currently at a point of “decline to rapid decline.”

- Our research reveals that United Methodist churches at our point in the “life cycle” who did nothing, or did too little, accelerated in decline and eventually closed.
- Our research further reveals that churches at our point in the life cycle did not achieve a preferred future solely by increased activities or programs. This led to un- preferred futures. A preferred future was achieved through prayerful, bold, well resourced, and implemented strategic planning.

Our plan seeks to be relevant as we adapt to a changing world while also honoring the rich traditions and core strengths that have led us to the present. We worked diligently to listen to our congregation prioritizing the needs of the community and respecting the passion of all persons, who we welcome into the quest of becoming followers of Jesus Christ. Two stakeholder gatherings took place where we received 200+ ideas or suggestions. Others sent us emails and provided their best thinking through conversations. The church leadership and the staff were surveyed, and their perspective augmented our thinking.

We believe that this plan is a “**Call to Action**” for a vital United Methodist congregation seeking to follow the Great Commandment (**Matthew 22:36-40**). Our prayer is that this spirit-filled plan will unite us in doing our best to transform our community and the world through God’s power and grace.

The team fully realizes that the loss of meaningful and spiritual connection with our community does not offer an optimistic future. If nothing is done, or too little is done, it is our opinion that the decline at FUMC will soon accelerate. The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to reestablish FUMC as a strong community church. The Action Steps contained in this document, when implemented with excitement, prayer, and proper resources, set FUMC on a path to becoming a community centered church which will provide a preferred future that is faithful to Christ and offers FUMC many fruitful years.

Throughout the planning process the priority need for excellent communication embracing all forms of current technology was emphasized including strengthening the social networks within the church. We are committed to communicating this plan and all that we have to offer as a local United Methodist congregation to our community, so that all who gather at FUMC feel welcome and at home.

***Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by His power at work within us; glory to Him in the church and in Jesus Christ for all generations, forever and always. Amen - Ephesians 3:20-21***

## **Guiding Pillars to Our Preferred Future**

### **Worship**

Fairfax United Methodist Church is committed to creating welcoming and engaging worship experiences for people of all ages. We will offer worship to God that is creative and inspiring, as well as relevant and accessible, to people of all generations and of diverse backgrounds. This plan calls for communicating effectively to our community what we currently offer in worship opportunities in addition to calling upon all members and friends of FUMC to be faithful in worship attendance.

We will strive to connect our worship more clearly to our mission relationships in the community offering traditional and modern settings equally supported by our congregation. The importance of children's presence in worship and families worshipping together is foundational to our beliefs concerning persons of all ages growing their faith and building bridges among all generations.

In the spring of 2008, FUMC began offering a modern worship service, Open Doors. This worship opportunity has attracted numerous families and individuals to our church. After planning and re-visioning together for seven months, the Open Doors Visioning Team made multiple recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee. We have embraced their input and integrated some of their thoughtful suggestions into this strategic plan.

The setting for Open Doors is the sanctuary. This setting presents significant barriers in terms of presenting a truly modern worship experience, so the plan outlines action to add technological enhancements to the current sanctuary, which will benefit the **traditional** and **modern** services, along with other programs presented in the sanctuary.

A proposed ministry expansion of a Community Life and Worship Center to be built on our property will afford numerous future possibilities including enabling our church to continue evolving worship opportunities further incorporating the community at large.

Reconnecting with our community is vital to a preferred future. A healthy church looks like the surrounding community, which includes schools, neighborhoods, civic groups and retail establishments. We propose partnering with an emerging ethnic congregation by offering our facilities to share in a mutually acceptable arrangement, including costs. This may be a United Methodist congregation or a church which is not in conflict with the major beliefs and practices of the United Methodist Church. This not only provides connection but also opportunities for spiritual growth through shared ministries which include special worship, VBS, Bible study, mission work, and fellowship. To share Christian community with more of our neighbors would be a mutually beneficial experience.

## **Mission**

Fairfax United Methodist Church will be fully engaged in serving and in utilizing our facilities and resources responding to Jesus's call to serve our community and the world. Our desire is to provide care to our neighbors and families in need throughout our community.

Our church is blessed with talented and committed people and substantial financial resources. We will partner with our local community agencies to design programs that benefit those who need our support most. As we continue to build mission experiences, we are committed to involving a larger segment of our congregation in serving others.

The importance of this strategic direction is founded in the Scripture: ***Jesus said, "As you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40) and "Go into all the world and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19).*** We want to provide food, shelter, health care and education for some of the world's neediest people.

It is our hope that numerous by-products of this strategic direction will emerge:

- It is transformational for our own community.
- It engages all generations in meaningful faith development and starts an involvement in community mission work.
- It attracts new people in our community to God's mission.
- It leverages the talents and professional skills of our members.
- It is an important aspect of our Methodist tradition.

To better define the specific needs of our local community, a group of committee members met with a Human Services Coordinator for the City of Fairfax, and we carefully reviewed the demographics from the schools in our area particularly in terms of Free/Reduced Meals and Limited English Proficiency data.

We learned: 1) in school year 2014-2015, approximately 31 percent of children attending city schools received Free/Reduced Meals and approximately 17 percent were limited English proficient students (*See Appendix F*); 2) requests are received daily in search of transportation assistance; 3) home repairs are needed for many barely making ends meet; and 4) due to building development plans, members of the community are being displaced from the limited affordable housing available. Our eyes were opened to the substantial and urgent needs of our neighbors.

We believe that the primary focus of our call to mission should include clear and specific action in our local community. As a result, throughout the tenure of this plan, we will seek to design and offer opportunities for our congregation to serve in a variety of ways. Specifically, we hope to address the following needs:

1. Home Repair for Needy City Residents
2. Senior Needs Initiative
3. Children's Hunger Initiative
4. Affordable Housing

These initiatives support our foundational commitment to serve "off campus but in our own backyard."

We will also seek collaborative opportunities with non-profit organizations to meet at the church (ex. Counseling, Substance Abuse, Family and Grief). We will ultimately be able to increase the number of these affiliations with the opening of our Community Life and Worship Center.

## **Learning**

An important element in growing FUMC is to expand the number of "portals" into the church. This significant thread is woven through all of the pillars, and it is first and foremost in Learning. In order to become more inviting, we will rebrand our small group ministry and current Sunday School offerings across all levels. We hope to address the unique needs of every generation seeking to create more intergenerational learning opportunities for our congregation and community.

As our community becomes more transient, larger and more diverse, the need for friendships is greater (**John 15**). At the same time these relationships are more difficult to create and sustain. As people find meaning in small groups, they become more emotionally connected to each other, more

spiritually connected to the Body of Christ (**Ephesians 4**), and more financially invested in the church's mission.

FUMC has a brief history with small groups, and from the earliest days, our roots included very strong Sunday School classes. Enhancing our small group offerings is essential to our future, and making additional connections with existing community groups will help individuals to find a sense of belonging while also providing opportunities for leadership and the expression of compassion. Small groups go back to the apostolic age, and were vital to John Wesley's Methodist renewal movement in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Small groups have been enjoying a renaissance in the last 30 years within the general church in the United States. A few small groups have begun at FUMC that have been successful, but the process of starting, cultivating, and supporting small groups has plateaued. This plan seeks to take next, vital steps to grow FUMC's small group ministry.

FUMC is well known in our community for an excellent pre-school program. Currently, our pre-school is a half-day option serving only those families with the means to transport children mid-day. Our desire is to develop a full-day pre-school option, which will serve children whose parents work full-time. The ideal would be to offer the program with before and after care running from 6:00 AM until 6:00 PM.

New resources in Christian education and small group development are paramount to integrating technology and the latest teaching and learning strategies into our current and future programs.

Educational and recreational activities offered for a variety of age groups in the new facility will yet again increase the "portals" into our church family.

Building on work that is already underway, FUMC will utilize technology to tell our story beyond the walls of the church and strengthen the social networks within the church. We understand that to reach more people and increase the influence of our ministries, we must become sufficiently "tech savvy."

## **Next Steps**

The Strategic Planning Team will continue to meet on a quarterly basis for the purpose of:

1. Developing a proposal for FUMC governance, organization and structure. Through the SP process, there have been significant concerns related to the effectiveness of the current governance structure. SP is asking to present to Church Council a plan that creates an efficient structure which will best support the Plan; and
2. Recommending modifications and keeping FUMC leadership accountable to the implementation of the Plan.

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee is asked to use the Strategic Plan to develop staff and job descriptions in ways that support and implement the Strategic Plan on the staffing level.

## FUMC STRATEGIC PLAN

### Guiding Pillars to Our Preferred Future

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#### Worship

Create welcoming and authentic worship experiences for people of all ages by revitalizing the worship community and providing avenues for new growth and engagement.

ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE	WHO
Assess to determine needs and enhance the Audio/Visual Environment in the sanctuary	Current-2016	ODVT/Trustees
Creatively market all worship services to the community	Now/Ongoing	Welcoming
Begin visioning for the Community Life and Worship Center (CLWC) with a five member team attending the <i>Worship Facilities Exposition</i> in Nashville, TN	September 2016	ODVT/Pastor/Worship Leader
Re-launch worship services with the facility updates	Late 2016 or Early 2017	ODVT, Worship, Staff
Elect a Visioning and Feasibility Team for the CLWC	2017	Nominations and Personnel
Elect a Building Committee for the CLWC	2018	Nominations and Personnel
Partner with an ethnic congregation within our facilities	2018	Sr. Pastor/Task Force
Celebrate the opening of the CLWC	2019	All
Begin the visioning and feasibility study about planting a new church in Fairfax County	2020	Sr. Pastor/Task Force



## Mission

Become fully engaged in serving our local neighbors and the congregation by utilizing our facilities and resources with over-arching themes to include feeding the hungry, assisting seniors with transportation, repairing homes for the needy, and providing affordable housing in Fairfax City. Diligently seek other opportunities to support those in need in our community.

ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE	WHO
During Back-to School week, provide laundry baskets to families containing personal supplies (soap, deodorant, underwear, socks, etc.)	August 2016	Outreach
Reach out and collaborate with groups to meet at the church (AA, Girl Scouts, Careers, etc.)	Aug-Dec 2016	Staff
Coordinating with our local schools, provide <b>summer</b> food/meals for children receiving Free/Reduced waivers	Pilot spring break/ Begin Summer 2017	Outreach Com. Coor./SPRC
Offer 6 opportunities per year for our congregation to make needed home repairs including the elderly, whose financial resources are dwindling	October 2016 (Stewardship Campaign)	Outreach
	2017-beyond- Fully implement	
Using our church bus and website, design a transportation program (Kind of like Uber for the Elderly) to assist seniors with grocery shopping or getting to medical appointments, etc.	2017/Development  2018/Launch	Outreach
Establish a <b>FUMC Affordable Housing Board</b> to explore purchasing affordable rental properties in the community. The church would maintain and manage the properties perhaps in partnership with another entity.	2017/18 Establish Board  2018 Purchase and Manage Property(ies)	Sr. Pastor/ Nominations

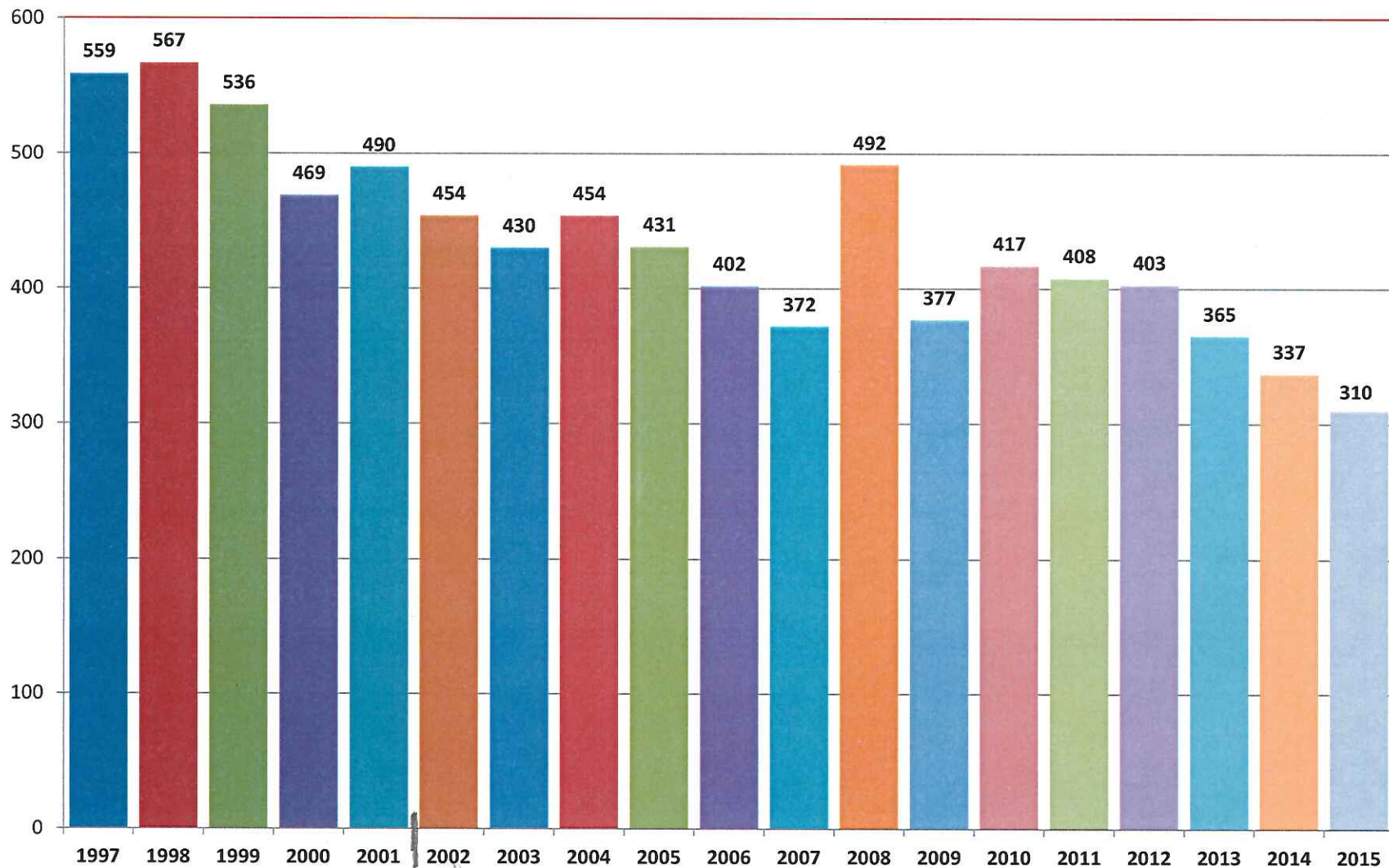


## Learning

Expand the “portals” to FUMC by enhancing small group ministry and redesigning our pre-school program to full-day. Fully utilize technology to tell our story to the community and the world.

ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE	WHO
Pilot <b>Gathering 139</b> -a learning opportunity for children (4-10) during the second half of Open Doors. Activities will be based on weekly sermon topics.	Summer 2016	Discipleship
Re-launch small group ministries (By definition, a small group is a “micro community” of 3 to 12 followers of Jesus doing Christian life deeply together. This includes a common devotion life, fellowship, common shared meals, and a whole-hearted, faithful, and prayerful support of one another. In other words, <i>experiential discipleship</i> .) –Howerton	2017	Staff/SPRC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A staff person shall gather a team of people committed to training, implementing and growing small group ministry.</li> </ul>	Jan-Mar 2017	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small group team is trained, and they organize for a kickoff</li> </ul>	Mar-Aug 2017	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement, grow, assess and re-plan small group ministry.</li> </ul>	Fall 2017	
Study, plan and commit to a full-day pre-school program to open as a pilot in the fall of 2018.	2017-18	Pre-S Bd/Dir.
Live stream worship and offer other educational programs, podcasts, webinars, and certification classes from the CLWC	2019	Production/SPR

## Fairfax UMC Average Yearly Attendance



On May 18, 2008 the Open Doors Service began at 5:30 pm. There were a number of members who supported that service as well as one or more morning services for the first year.

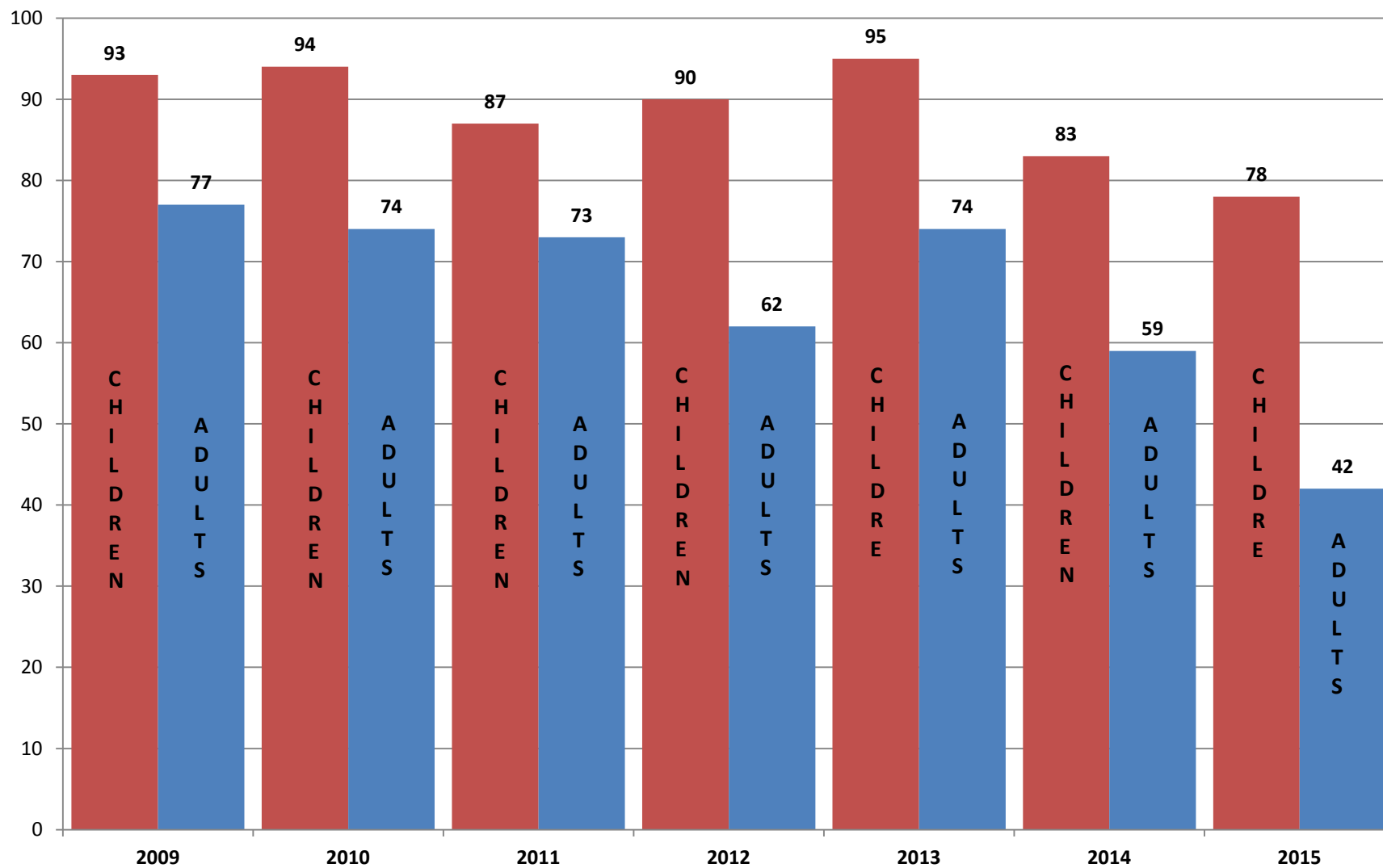
The last full calendar (Jan - Dec) year for Open Doors at 5:30 pm was 2011.

For 2011 the average Weekly Attendance for Open Doors was 51.

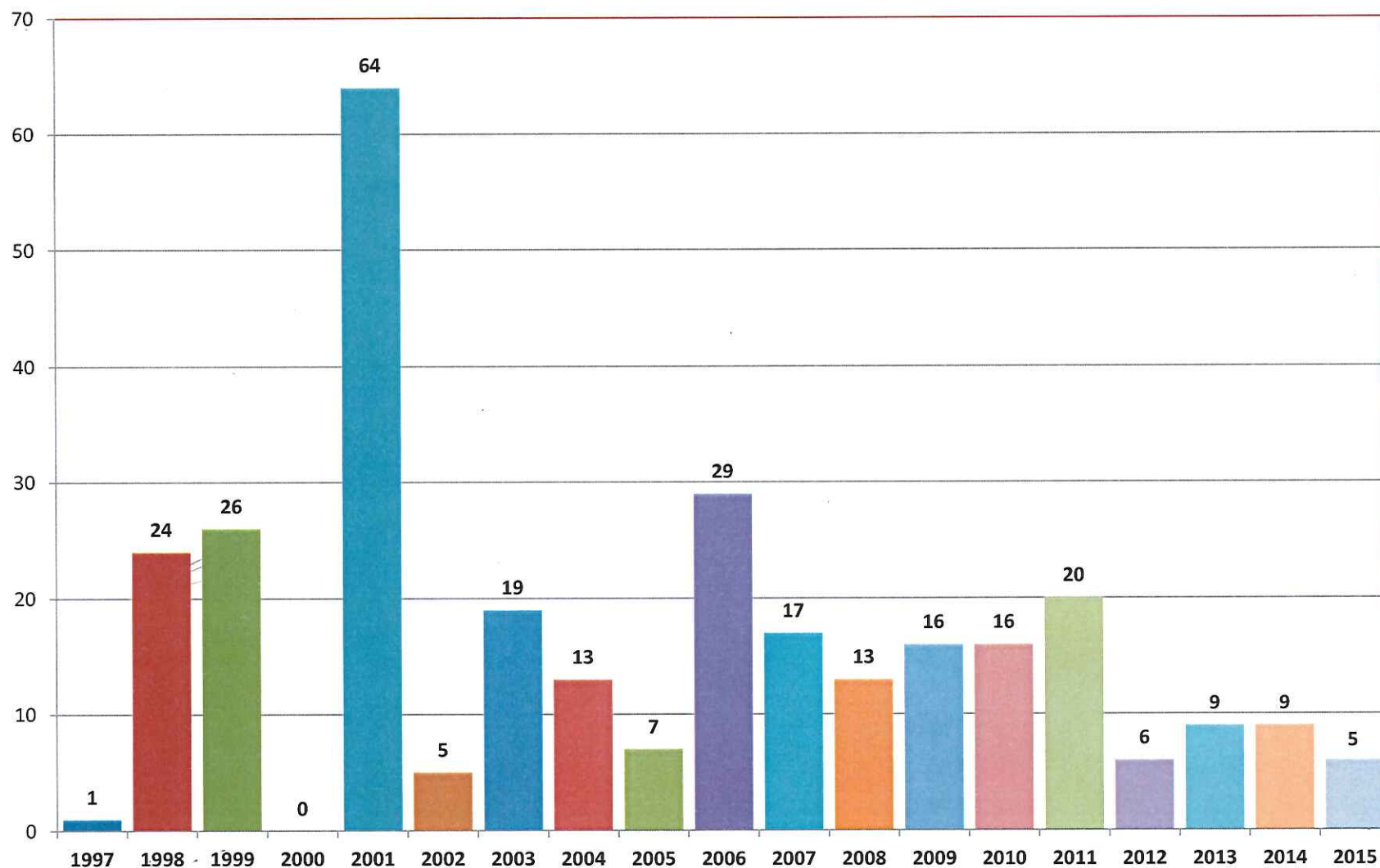
The Open Doors Service moved to 11:15 am on September 9, 2012.

For 2015 the average Weekly Attendance for Open Doors was 78.

## Fairfax UMC Average Yearly Attendance for Sunday School 2009 - 2015



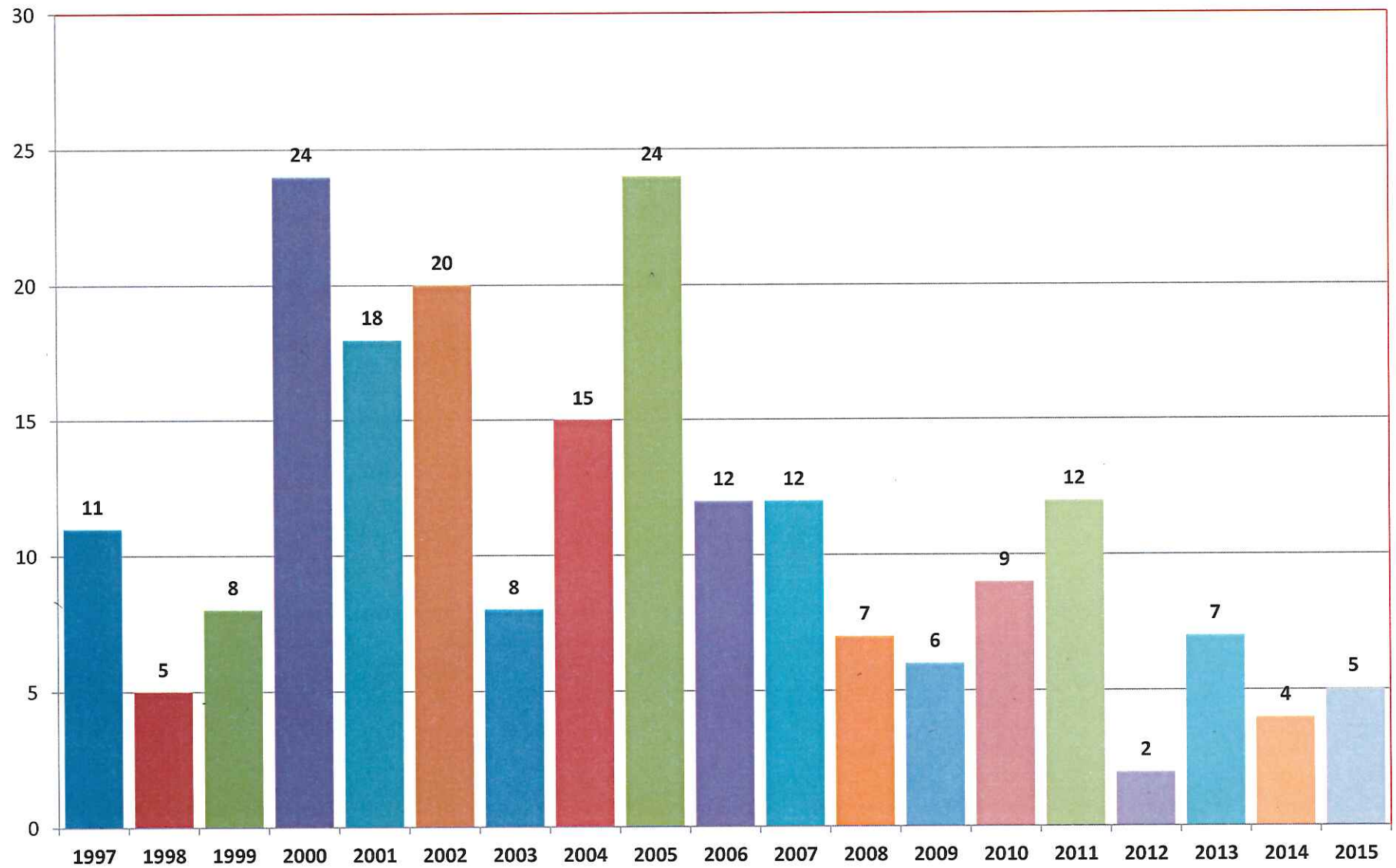
### Fairfax UMC Received by Confirmation



In 1997 there was no Confirmation Class, best guess is that the one that was confirmed was a left over from the Confirmation Class of 1996.

In 2001 there were two Confirmation Classes held. There were Confirmation Sundays in June and December.

## Fairfax UMC Members Received by Profession of Faith



**Fairfax United Methodist Church  
Local School Demographics**

Elementary

	<b>DANIELS RUN</b>	<b>PROVIDENCE</b>
Asian	13.81%	14.03%
Black	7.44%	5.70%
Hispanic	31.47%	38.61%
White	42.10%	36.71%
Other	5.18%	4.96%

Secondary

	<b>LANIER MS</b>	<b>FAIRFAX HS</b>
Asian	19.95%	25.09%
Black	9.74%	10.06%
Hispanic	22.68%	19.21%
White	42.17%	40.51%
Other	5.46%	5.13%

**Fairfax United Methodist Church**  
**Free/Reduced Meals and English Language Learners**

	<b>Free/Reduced Meals</b>	<b>English Language Learners (Limited English Proficient)</b>
<b>FAIRFAX PYRAMID</b>		
Daniels Run ES	33.3%	29%
Eagle View ES	18.9%	22.3%
Providence ES	42.7%	34.9%
Willow Springs ES	8.9%	7.9%
Lanier MS	27.5%	11.9%
Fairfax High School	26.7%	9.3%
<b>WOODSON PYRAMID</b>		
Fairfax Villa ES	31%	25%
<b>OAKTON PYRAMID</b>		
Mosby Woods ES	25.5%	23.4%