

Executive Summary of Church Census Results
First Baptist Church, Macon, GA
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There were 214 surveys completed representing 130 separate family units.

Who They Are. More than two-thirds (68.47%) of the families in this congregation are married couples and their children, with 55% consisting of first-time marriages, and another 13% in blending families (Table 1). More than one-quarter (27.7%) are single adult families—never married, divorced, or widowed. Like most American congregations, married families are overrepresented and single adult families are underrepresented when compared with the general U.S. population in which almost 48% of adults are single. The age of families of this congregation (Table 4) shows a significant number of families who have been married or remarried more than 30 years (40%). The remaining families are evenly distributed across the family age span. The 65-79 year old age groups predominate (30%), but there is a fairly significant number of older-middle aged adults, with 23% of those surveyed aged 50-64 and a fairly significant number of older-older adults aged 80-94 (13%), (Table 8). Youth make up 7% of the respondents.

Consistent with the age span of this congregation, almost two-thirds (63%) of the 130 households responding (n=82) do not have children living in the home (Table 13). Of the families with children, 8 have preschoolers, 17 have elementary school-age children, 19 have teenagers, and 11 have young adult children living at home (Table 13). Although most of these children are biologically related to their parents, 3 are adoptive relationships, 2 are in blending families, and 2 are grandchildren living with grandparents (1 of those 2 have their parents in the same household as well), (Table 14).

Families in this congregation are almost all White/Euro-American (90%) with a few families (less than 1% in each category) that identified as Black/African-American, Native American, Hispanic, or White and Native American, White and Black, White and Hispanic, White and Asian or as “other.” A little more than 3% did not answer this question (Table 3). These many variations illustrate the complexity of racial and ethnic identification in contemporary society. This is a well educated congregation, with nearly one-half (47%) having earned graduate degrees (Table 5). Additionally, more than one-quarter (27.5%) have a highest education level of college graduate. Over one-third (34%) of the congregation have a fairly “high” distribution of incomes from \$75,000-119,999, (Table 12). Additionally, 4% report income between 120,000-149,999. Another near quarter, (21.5%) has more “normal” incomes between \$30,000-74,999. A significant portion (23%) either did not report or did not know household income. Like most American congregations, there are more women (52.8%) than men (33%), (14% did not answer) but this gap seems to be slightly greater in this congregation than other churches (Table 7).

Families’ Connection to the Congregation. The congregation consists of a significant number of persons who have been attending for 1-4years (19%). These numbers suggest significant new growth (Table 10). At the same time, more than one-third (35%) reported that they have

been attending this church for 11-22 years and 14% have been attending more than 30 years. This suggests a committed core group in the congregation serving alongside the newer members. This congregation appears to be a neighborhood congregation, with most families (54%) living less than a 15-minute travel distance or less (36% travel 16-30 minutes and 10% travel over 30 minutes). This has implications for programming, either in how events are scheduled at the congregation's site or in considering holding meetings and other events in homes or other sites closer to the work and home life of members or prospective members (Table 11). Although this congregation is very connected to its immediate neighborhood, drawing more than one-half of its attendees from there, it is also drawing significant participation from the larger community with many traveling more than 15 minutes to attend. This may or may not be the target area for growth. Although most families attend this congregation together (n=76), 8 families reported that they have a family member attending another church, and 13 families report that they have family members not connected to any congregation (Table 15). Thirty respondents reported that they live alone (Table 15).

Time Together. Most families with children report that they spend significant amounts of time together on a daily basis, with 88% reporting 3 or more hours a day, and 38% more than 5 hours a day (Table 17).

Strengths and Challenges: Life together at Home. The families in this congregation are strong—most feel they can depend on one another, and they are committed to one another. Most feel well connected to their community (i.e., “If we moved, we’d be missed”). They are able to refrain from physical expressions of anger. Many feel strengthened as a result of crises they have experienced, do not argue in hurtful ways, and are able to compromise when needed. They feel challenged though, to find ways to serve their communities together as families and to seek outside help when needed. In fact, “serving our community as a family” and “seeking outside help as needed” were tied the most often mentioned “challenges.” Other challenges are refraining from blaming one another, finding ways to balance time spent with friends and neighbors and sharing interests and hobbies. They also seem to have some trouble with helping non-family members in need, spreading household chores among all family members and learning to try new solutions, (Table 18).

Strengths and Challenges: Life together in this Congregation. Similar results were found for this “church family,” (Table 29). They are committed as a congregation, can depend on one another, many serve in some way, and they protect one another’s well-being. They help others outside the congregation. Most feel that they would be missed if they moved away. Connected to what families said about their life together, the congregation also finds it a challenge to seek outside help when needed, to try new solutions, and to gather in small groups in their congregational life.

Interpersonal Relationship Stress. The most common stressors for individuals in this congregation include:

- Serious illness or disability
- Prioritizing money use
- Depression/emotional problems
- Financial strain
- Caring for sick/disabled family

- Death of a family member or close friend
- Problems balancing work and family
- Too much parent-child conflict
- Difficult in-law relations
- Job difficulty or stressors

These are generally the most commonly mentioned stressors in other congregations as well, although sometimes in somewhat different order (Table 40). Consistent with the current economic news, financial stressors were ranked more highly than with some other churches that have completed the survey in the past.

Living Our Faith. Of the faith practices individuals reported, in order of most frequency, that they give money to church/causes, pray, attend weekly worship services, participate in Bible study and encourage others after failure. Least-frequent faith practices include promoting social justice, sharing the Christian faith, studying church teachings, discussing responses to issues, volunteering to help the less fortunate, and accepting gifts/care gratefully. For the most part, these patterns hold for families as well. When thinking about family faith practices, most (74%) of the families in this congregation report eating together on at least an almost daily basis.

How the Church Can Help. Families most often asked for help in **knowing what we can do together to make a difference for others** They also would like help with:

- Caring for sick, disabled, or aging family members
- Developing healthy habits-eating, exercise, rest and recreation
- Working as a family for more justice in the world
- Caring for God’s created world as a family
- Finding ways we can include all ages in community service
- Retirement
- Connecting community service to what we know about our faith
- Managing money
- Developing a strong marriage

These responses do differ somewhat across the age span of the congregation. Attention to those differences would be helpful in planning the church’s response to these felt needs.

Our Church in the World: Consistent with what respondents have said in earlier sections, they do believe this congregation cares about the needs of its community and the larger world, however, there may be some difference between care and actual response to these needs. While there is a definite perception that the church offers opportunities for families to be involved in missions and service opportunities, families still want to have help to fulfill that mission together as a congregation and as individuals and family units. This congregation feels and seems to demonstrate a similar response to its immediate community and to perceived needs around the world.
