

## Report from Visioning Process

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The committee let the following passage from Luke ground and guide the spirit of its process. In it Jesus teaches about obedient listening. Jesus said,

No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light. Then pay attention to how you listen; for to those who have, more will be given. (16:16-18)

Through our process of appreciative inquiry and attentive listening, we believe that we have exposed much of the light that this church has shone and continues to shine in the lives of our members, our community, and our world. We have also developed a strong sense of different areas into which the Holy Spirit, as manifest in the interests and energy of our members, is leading our congregation into the future.

Throughout this process, our conviction has only grown stronger about the importance of our church in the lives of our members and in our broader community. We have learned much of the good that we want to claim and maintain from our past, even as we have discovered new areas to explore and embrace as God calls Rumble into the future. We asked participants to reflect on and respond to five sets of questions. In what follows we list the questions, and then summarize consistent trends and noteworthy aspects of the responses that we received.

1. **What first drew you to Rumble/what keeps you at Rumble?**

Across the various factors that have drawn members to Rumble, many spoke about the warmth of our space and our people. Rumble is not only a beautiful building in a beautiful place, its members and its pastors are (and have been) warm and inviting and its services are effective means for the worship of God. People spoke about the inclusiveness/openness of the congregation and its “family-like attitude.”

2. **What do you value most about Rumble? What is the best thing about Rumble? When were you most proud of your association with Rumble?**

Three areas stand out in particular in people’s responses to these questions. First, people most value congregational life at Rumble. Many spoke about the care that the congregation shows for its members, the communal fellowship in the circles, the choir, and the Sunday school classes, the hospitality and the energy that members have for sharing each other’s lives, for civic engagement and community service. One response said that the congregation is not judgmental about attendance. Many people said that Rumble’s traditional worship was what they valued most about the church, and numerous others added something about the progressive spirit of our traditional worship, but almost an equal number of folks mentioned missional activities as the best thing about Rumble. Some spoke about mission trips, many mentioned BR CARES. Finally, when asked about a time when they were most proud of our congregation, a number of different events were mentioned, but many had to do with times of tension when the church led the congregation to respond faithfully as followers of Jesus but also honored differences of opinions.

3. **What would you say is the single most important thing your church has contributed to your life? When was a time you felt most alive, engaged, or motivated at Rumble?**

Many church members spoke of the importance of special events in their lives that took place at Rumble, especially weddings, funerals, occasional classes, specific mission efforts, and more. Several individuals and couples mentioned the difficult conversations that have occurred over the last decade focused on changing cultural issues and concerns expressed within the church, the Presbytery, and the denomination and how much help the Rumble congregation and leadership provided through those difficult conversations. The importance of church outreach and service was again mentioned under this set of questions.

4. **What are the core values of Rumble?**

In a sentence, worship, mission, and community. A clear theme that emerged was that Rumble is a church that cares deeply about “the least of these” and demonstrates that care and concern in action. The spiritual lives of individuals, families, the congregation, the community, and beyond are attended to in profound ways. Ours is a church where serious theological reflection and dialogue are valued and attended to. We have a history and tradition of excellent leadership from our pastors who engage us in thoughtful contemplation, dialogue, and action.

5. **What hopes do you have for Rumble as you look to the future? What would you want to be involved in (regardless of time or money) the future at Rumble? What role would you like to play? How do you imagine Rumble involved in the community, nation, and world in the future?**

Common themes that emerged were a desire to increase our impact in local missions and service, a desire to become more inclusive and diverse as our community continues to grow in number and diversity, and a wish that we could broaden our membership, especially by attracting more young families. Numerous individuals mentioned specific mission projects that they would like to see us increase or become differently involved in, or more effective in promoting (Blowing Rock CARES, RISE Against Hunger, Habitat, etc.). Several people lamented that we were not more effective in discussing and addressing major social problems at the local, national, and global level that affect our community in various ways. But many of the same people had great ideas about concrete ways that we could become more effective.

In short, our church is filled with folks who see it as a warm and worshipful community of Christ’s disciples, who are highly active members of our broader community, and who yearn to increase our impact as a leading voice for faithfulness and justice in the high country.