First Baptist Church Profile, Torrington, Wyoming (December 2023)

**The Area**

Torrington, Wyoming is in Goshen County, on the southeastern side of the state. It is 32 miles from Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 83 miles from Cheyenne (the state capitol), and 184 miles from Denver, Colorado. The population of the county is estimated at 12,562, with 6,140 residing in Torrington. Goshen county has a population density of 5.6 people per square mile. Torrington is made up of 78% individuals who are white and 17% Latino or Hispanic all other races are less than 1% each. Goshen county also reports 24% of the population as older than 65.

Goshen County is a rural farming and ranching community. Torrington is home to the nation’s 5th largest sale barn which boasts that they can ship cattle to 19 different states within 24-hours. Torrington is also home to Eastern Wyoming College (EWC). EWC offers 2-year degrees in a variety of areas, has a vibrant community outreach program, and hosts the local community theater. In addition to agriculture, the school systems and hospital/medical industries are the area’s largest employers. Torrington has a vibrant downtown, that includes a world class bakery and confectioner. In 2022, the average median income is reported to be $55,500 with 12% of the population listed as living in poverty. The cost of living in Goshen County is considerably less than many other locations in the nation. Torrington is a good place to raise a family, or retire, the crime rate is low, the wind blows frequently, and the winters are considered mild (compared to the rest of the state, the snow is usually gone between storms).

**First Baptist Church**

First Baptist Church is reflective of the community. We are small, with 138 registered members and an average of 40 people in attendance per week. We have 10 to 15 who attend regularly who are not members of the church. We also broadcast our service weekly via Facebook. Prior to Covid, FBC maintained a full choir, music has been and remains important to our ministry. Many of the FBC congregation members are older than 65. FBC was established in Torrington in 1918 by the chapel car ministries. Like many congregations, FBC has seen growth, conflicts, splits and has struggled since Covid to find the right person to provide spiritual leadership for us to grow into the future. We are church board driven although our boards are smaller than most and we are considering transitioning to one church board. FBC welcomes new members through statement of faith, letter of transfer and baptism. Speaking specifically for us, we tend to be slow adopters, most of us avoid conflict and we are looking for a pastor who will lead us through biblical based teachings, spiritually and literally grow with us and provide some stability/consistency to the church.

**Trustees**

FBC is a mission giving church and financially stable, the church sold its parsonage in the late 90’s and the income from the sale was invested. That investment has grown and allowed the stewards of the building and grounds to provide a beautiful place to worship on Mainstreet. In addition, if a new item is purchased, or replaced or when a major repair is needed a special collection from the members will cover much of the cost. Pastoral salary, compensation, and benefits are in-line with community averages.

Jeff Edwards, Chair-Trustees, Search Committee Member, Chair

**Diaconate**

The diaconate board assists the pastor where needed. Monthly communion service is prepared on the first Sunday by the diaconate who with the pastor serve the elements to the congregation. The diaconate visits and serves communion to a minimal shut-in population with the pastor. The Diaconate organizes pulpit supply and prepare worship leaders if needed. The diaconate board will meet with church candidates and recommend them for membership. We greet visitors/guests with welcome packages that will introduce people to our church. We also administer the deaconate fund for those in need. The diaconate board is here to help where and when needed.

Pam Pugsley, Chair-Diaconate, Search Committee Member

**Board of Christian Education**

As a board, our focus is missions and the children’s ministry of the church. In the past, we have had yard sales to help fund community projects (i.e. painting an older person’s house, repairing a broken fence, things of that nature). Traditionally we provide free hot dogs and chips during the fair day parade. We have participated in the community trunk or treat by providing batteries for smoke detectors for the adults and small bag of candy with a verse for the children. We also give to international missions along with participating in filling shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child.

Currently, we have a small Sunday school and children’s church group. We are hopeful that a children’s choir could be formed in the future. At the present time, we do not have any jr. high or high school programs.

We are hope that a candidate for pastor at our church is a person who has a vision for how we, as a church, can show people of our community the love of Christ through our witness and community involvement.

Sherri Schultz, Chair, Board of Christian Education, Search Committee Member

**Youth Programs**

FBC programs provided to children and youth include Sunday school for children fifth grade and under and children’s church during part of the worship hour. Children are dismissed from the service after a time of singing and prayer before the pastor’s sermon. Before being dismissed, the children are called forward for a children’s message given by the pastor which includes a small treat as they depart. Because of the demographics of the church body, the church does not have any activities or education geared toward middle or high school aged youth.

Looking into the future, FBC is welcome to start programs for middle and high school aged youth. Some of which include Sunday school and youth programs during the week. In addition, the church is open to a children’s program during the week as well.

Karis Walker, – Search Committee Member, Youth representative

**Summary of our Church Life**

The church prioritizes Sunday School for all ages, fostering a community committed to spiritual growth. Midweek prayer and Bible study sessions provide an additional avenue for spiritual recharge, yet opportunities for children’s programs and consistent childcare during services could be improved.

While the church offers ministries for youth, seniors, men, and women, there’s potential for further development to cater to specific needs within these demographics. Small group Bible studies are available, nurturing relationships and spiritual growth in a more intimate setting.

There’s a focus on assessing spiritual gifts and encouraging involvement in missions, community service, and ecumenical worship events. Intergenerational activities promote unity among diverse age groups.

However, there’s room for enhancement in providing for special needs groups and expanding programs such as day-care ministry, and community basic needs outreach. Further improvement could be made in offering teacher training events and opportunities for children during midweek activities.

Overall, the church exhibits a strong commitment to spiritual growth and community engagement, with ongoing programs and various opportunities. To create a more inclusive and diverse church community, it’s essential to focus on enhancing ministries for specific demographics and expanding programs to cater better to diverse needs, especially for children, special needs groups, and specific community outreach initiatives.

**Summary of our Worship Life**

In terms of congregation involvement in our worship life, there's a notable desire for more active engagement. People greet each other as part of worship, prayer concerns are regularly sourced from the congregation, but opportunities for lay leaders and children to participate seem less frequent. While the church covenant isn't read regularly, there's potential for more involvement through responsive readings/litanies and unison prayers/bible readings.

Regarding music, congregation participation in praise songs and familiar hymns is a vibrant aspect, while other musical elements like choirs, handbells, and varied instruments occur less frequently (and even less so post covid). Pre-recorded music accompaniment is not widely used.

As for the minister's role, there's a strong preference for them to be the primary worship leader, delivering sermons with a biblical focus and involving themselves in the children's story. There's a desire for pastoral prayers to include all concerns mentioned, though sharing leadership on topics like evangelism, social issues, and stewardship with the laity is less common. Encouragement for charismatic gifts in worship and preaching on such matters is currently not a priority for the congregation. The pastor’s political views should never be shared from the pulpit.

We expect the pastor to play a crucial role in understanding and addressing community needs, mediating conflicts, and offering counseling and healing relationships. They provide a strong foundation in theological teachings and guide individuals towards spiritual growth.

Our congregation values financial stewardship and effective budget implementation. We're dedicated to expanding our community through membership programs and ensuring transparent communication.

Together, our focus is on realizing our vision and sustaining the church while fostering an inclusive and caring environment. We prioritize planning and managing church goals, nurturing fellowship, and encouraging both individual and collective stewardship.

We emphasize active participation in worship, fostering connections among members, and engaging in youth ministry for nurturing Christian faith and discipleship.

Our collective efforts aim to build a vibrant and spiritually enriching community, where the pastor and congregation collaborate to serve and grow together.

**Other Items**

We operate using our church by-laws.

**Our Mission Statement**

First Baptist Church of Torrington, Wyoming, seeks to be an obedient people, empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a witness, glorifying God in Christ’s love.

**Pastoral Relations Committee**

Will consist of at least 2 members of the current search committee, meet with the Pastor regularly and only address items brought to the Pastoral Relations committee in writing.

**Wedding Policy**

We, the Christian community of First Baptist Church, Torrington, Wyoming, strive to be obedient to God’s word and to uphold the Biblical truth that marriage should be between on man and one woman. Therefore, it is our Church Policy to deny a same sex wedding ceremony to be performed within the Church or by the Church Pastor.