

Q5

Export ▾

Part of our day will be a Question and Answer time that we are calling Open Mike with Pastor Mike. This is your opportunity to ask a question that helps you get to know Mike better. Please write your question here, whether you are able or unable to attend on June 26th.

Answered: 39 Skipped: 28

● Responses (39)

▲ Text Analysis

🔍 My Categories

Some of you didn't send questions but you did write words of encouragement to me and I appreciate them very much. Editorial comments on the Survey Monkey will be considered for the next one.

6/12/2016 9:29 AM [View respondent's answers](#) What initiatives are you coordinating to support our current congregation, and to expand our community outreach in, and ministry to, our New Town neighborhood? What is your vision in getting the church to grow membership? **First, my hope is that in having one service for the remainder of the summer will lead us to grow in prayer, fellowship and service. I pray you will use this time to promote unity, seek the healing of heart and emotions you need, and gain energy for our summer initiatives and momentum as we move into fall.**

Here Are Some of The Things I Can Do...

I am offering a variety of visitation training Sunday mornings in July from 8:45 to 9:45. Do you have a heart for the homebound or people recovering from surgery and their caregivers? Do you like to welcome new neighbors or our worship guests?

I will challenge you to develop some testimonies. A three minute personal testimony, a three minute church testimony, a five minute personal testimony, a five minute church testimony, a Gospel presentation, a defend-the-faith testimony, and an unanswered prayer testimony.

I can teach you several ways to have a conversation with someone where you don't know if they know Christ, or whether they even have an interest in Jesus.

Does your heart ache to see so many members missing? It is a different skill set to walk with a person who has become distant from Christ and the Church, who is disenchanted with NTUMC, or who has become apathetic and bored with Christ and the Church, whatever the reason.

I am scheduling visits with as many of the 200 inactive people on our Professing Roll and regular attenders who are inactive. Our fellowship would be so enriched if we could retain them and I believe the Holy Spirit can do it. I don't proselytize: if people have joined elsewhere I do not persuade them to come back. But, if people are *attending or trying churches* and I can get a visit, I will do everything I can to encourage them. My hope is that people will say *I've not participated and I want to start doing so again.*

I am coordinating with staff and personally recruiting you to pick up the tasks no longer covered by our departing staff. Take a look at the Task List and pray about where and how you can get involved.

Grace and Hope Counseling LLC, the private practice of our own Kelly Franzone, licensed professional counselor, has a part-time office at NTUMC. She maintains her own clients and also offers counseling to church members on referral from me and from the church.

We have a Search Team for our next Director of Youth and Young Adults. Allen Stephenson is the chair. I have approved a slightly lower salary range, we are open to people inside and outside of our church family applying, and of course we are open to a volunteer director.

I SUPPORT CPR (Community Prayer Room) at least for the present. It's healthy, it's outreach, and you don't pull up fruit-producing plants when you're hungry.

I have some ideas about being more personally involved and connected in New Town neighborhood. I have to be careful I do not overextend myself.

BUDGET: Financial stability is crucial. 40% of our annual budget is being committed to the mortgage. Most bankers say it shouldn't be over 30% of income. Consultants say do not exceed 15%. Debt is a cruel master. We are hog-tied until we the mortgage is in balance with our financial picture.

I want to do ALPHA in the fall. Again, all hands on the net is how it's going to happen. It will take a lot of work over the next 6-8 weeks to launch in September. ALPHA is a 10-12 session course for new or inquiring Christians that include meals, brief teaching, Q&A conversation, and a lot of fun.

6/18/2016 11:29 AM View respondent's answers I miss the traditional service during the early service on Sundays. Bring it back, please! **6/12/2016 8:46 AM View respondent's answers** Could we do the more traditional service at the 9:15 service instead of the second service? **You have been here a while! My notes indicate we last had an early traditional service [5 years ago] on September 4, 2011. I hear your plea. No, I have not received a word from the Lord to do this.** **6/11/2016 9:37 AM View respondent's answers** How about a regular not a somewhat Traditional Service and a Contemporary Service so that all are served? **30% said they would be interested in a more traditional service. Another 250 people attend but did not bother to do the Survey so I can't guess their responses. Let's say it stays at 1/3. We would have a potential pool 90-100. Would people who have their worship times switched stay, or leave because the time of the service is the driving factor due to personal preference, or their job?**

6/18/2016 6:23 AM View respondent's answers Do you feel appreciated/loved by New Town United Methodist? **Yes. I feel people care about me and want me and all of us to succeed.**

6/17/2016 2:21 PM View respondent's answers Where do you see NTUMC going in the next year? **I believe we will increase worship attendance, our generosity, and our visibility in our community. The church family needs to do more on the volunteer level. I see some willingness on your part to do so.**

6/14/2016 9:05 PM View respondent's answers Can we start the Crown course? It may assist in increasing giving. **Yes. We offered it last year but no one attended. Crown is an excellent Bible study that teaches people God's financial principles [not so much to increase giving] but in order to know Christ more intimately and to be free to serve Him. We live in a day when many people do not get their values from Jesus or from knowing the Bible [research indicates people get their values from family and personal experiences.] So many people do not know God's financial principles and just try to figure out ways to stay afloat. People need to see the practical usefulness in it. Sherri & I married in 1989 and took the Crown Course in 1992. For us, Crown was an important piece of our personal spiritual development. We heartily recommend Crown!**

6/14/2016 4:47 PM View respondent's answers What do you believe your strengths are as a Pastor? **I love Jesus and I love the Church. My spiritual gifts are strengths: Discerning of Spirits, Knowledge, Faith, and Pastor. I can think biblically and theologically. I can work with a variety of people and build teams and unity. I pray before everything I do in ministry. I have faith that God can do the usual and the unusual, the expected and unexpected. I know I can't do everything and don't know everything so I surround myself with people who have strengths I do not. I try to create a climate where good things happen. I try to be gentle in supervising/correcting people.**

6/13/2016 11:53 PM View respondent's answers How would you summarize your feelings regarding your time here over the past two years? **Challenging. A bit frustrated because I am not as fruitful as I had hoped and have been in other churches. I remind myself that it takes time and this is a unique situation so I try not to be too hard on myself.**

6/13/2016 9:30 PM View respondent's answers Top 2-3 passions in your life & why you're passionate about them. **People hear me talk about my favorite sports teams [Redskins & Nationals] and I think I'm passionate about them because they remind me of great times with family and friends. I think sport is just a great teacher of life and a metaphor on life itself. I like to play and I just enjoy them.**

I've been a runner since high school. Now, small fiber neuropathy in my feet along with middle age spread is hindering me. For me, running was therapy, an outlet for my competitive nature, a way to control my weight, have time alone, and meet other people. I miss it. Not having it affects my energy level. I don't like being overweight. I have to find something that is age appropriate, that I enjoy and will make time for.

Ministry wise, I have a passion for Worship. Personally, I have a pretty even temperament. The things that get me riled up are bigotry, racism, and people not being treated with fairness and love. I guess you could say I am passionate about these things.

6/13/2016 8:39 PM View respondent's answers How did you and Sherri meet? **Her Pastor's wife played matchmaker. She said, "Mike, you do nothing but go to school and pastor on weekends, you can't have any time for a social life. Are you interested in meeting someone?" I said Yes. I later learned she had already laid the groundwork with Sherri. I called her, introduced myself, and we had our first date sight unseen. We dated 11 months. When I proposed she said Yes. It's the best day's work I've ever done.**

6/13/2016 8:10 PM View respondent's answers What do you see as New Town's near future, growing, staying the same size, moving in a different direction to attract more members? **Growing. We have to be people who bear fruit and that means we have to do the things that bear fruit. Make new friends. Develop new relationships. We have to get outside the walls of the church. Ultimately the mission is about People.**

I want to say a word about small groups because I think it will be part of growing. I believe small groups must intentionally invite new people into their midst and give people a chance to see if it is the group for them. Small groups freeze up without influx of new people. An exception is when a small group is dealing with highly sensitive personal circumstances such as rape, incest past or present, a bitter divorce or adultery, or a high profile community situation. Then it is better for that group to be closed to outsiders to contain the sharing, keep confidentiality and give people a safe place to heal.

Moving in a different direction to attract more members is a major shift. I am correcting you to say we would not add a new direction to attract more *members*. I would do so to impact a segment of society to introduce people to Jesus and to the fellowship of the church. We would do so to make disciples. It's more than just semantics. Moving in a new direction involves establishing another standard of excellence which takes great time and a new skill set.

6/13/2016 5:49 PM View respondent's answers How do your plans match up with what I feel should be the top three priorities of NTUMC in 2016? **I've read your top 3 priorities and see we have a lot of things in common. We try not to have "business meetings" during church but sometimes we have to present things when we have everyone together to inform, pray over, and discern God's will. If you are referring to announcements, we try to keep them to a minimum and use the bulletin and screen for much of it. I hope you will choose to hang in there.**

6/13/2016 2:47 PM View respondent's answers What's up with the prayer room? If it's costing money, let's cut it. *I got help from our Leadership Board (LB) chair and Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) to answer this question. First, the Community Prayer Room. The cost is \$1,000/month rent plus \$100 in utilities. LB gave serious consideration to ending the rental of the CPR this Spring, and that action remains an option for the future. However, we looked at the broader issues facing us, one of them being the need to establish a presence in New Town. That space is an important part of an initiative to significantly increase NTUMC's visibility and activities in New Town. We began that initiative In June by hosting a cookout for area office workers and residents. Fifty people came, more office workers than residents, many of them had never heard of our church, ALL were pleased and gratified by our outreach, a free lunch, the good conversation, and were intrigued by the idea of having a place for prayer and worship, youth events, and weekly college age Bible study. The interest and good will generated was worth it all. This is a still-growing neighborhood. There are people and businesses who identify with or need the Gospel message. Our church MUST grow. This is one way to do so.*

Saving the \$1100/month would not come close to re-funding either of the staff positions cut, and it would not cover even one-third of the monthly additional salary benefit "health care" supplement. Since it could not substantially alleviate the pain of these cuts, for now it seems unwise to cut off a healthy, growing outreach ministry.

The other 2 churches that use the building: Is the added cost [electricity, water, cleaning, general wear and tear] covered by the amount they are paying to use the building? **Yes.** If we are going to sign another contract with them please consider the hidden cost of a high use building. **We are doing so.** For example paper products, light bulbs and any small "fix it" jobs we will have to contract out. **Both churches provide their own supplies.** I know this seems like nickel and dime stuff but we are losing staff because we can't pay them. **Faithful Remnant is our Latino friends. They have 30 in attendance and pay \$800/mo. This is their migrant working season; the men are out of the area so their attendance is lower.**

City Life has @ 70 adults and 30 kids and pay \$1500/month. We have taken into account regular usage and utilities, and supplies (many of which they supply their own).

This comes to \$2,300/month. Don't worry. We are not going in the hole on this. We reviewed and renewed with Faithful Remnant for one year at the same rate and usage. We meet with City Life in August. We do this because we believe it is part of our vision to help birth new faith communities, it widens the Church and blesses the whole Kingdom of God. FR wants their own place to worship. CL's model is to rent, not own. Both contracts contain a 90 day opt out clause for either party.

One adjustment we make: We do not have the church on mid-Saturday afternoons and evenings, mid-Sunday afternoons and evenings, and Monday evenings. It puts a tight schedule on hosting weddings, funerals, and special events. It makes holding renewal and revival services challenging. I am mindful of this.

You say that we are losing staff because we can't pay them. I believe it is just as true to say that we have had to let staff go because the costs of mortgage and staff are out of balance with the rest of our spending, we have decreased attendance which has translated into a decrease in giving, we have 200 inactive members on roll not engaged in the Lord's work at all, and we have too many members and attendees who are under giving, under involved, and under committed.

6/13/2016 12:49 PM View respondent's answers Why aren't you bolder from the pulpit? I am not talking about being loud. I am talking about letting your excitement for Jesus show. So many Sundays seem to have become an arena where "sweet watered down messages" are shared. What has happened & why? **Your question sounds like you really struggle to connect with me in a variety of ways: as a person, my style of preaching, and my leadership style. It surprises me to hear that you think I preach "sweet watered-down messages" because I work hard listening to the Holy Spirit, and to make integrity, authenticity, and faithfulness to the Gospel my core values and strengths. I work on my motivational and inspirational skills to improve my sermon delivery.**

It sounds like so far I have not been what you hoped for or what you prefer. I can feel this is a huge adjustment for you. I hear you saying that you need to see clear and visible passion with engaging and dynamic leadership from me in and outside the pulpit. I think many here would agree with you, and it is something I want to improve, too. I hope you decide to hang in there.

I do feel things very strongly. I care very deeply about your soul, people's souls, the Gospel, and the church. If I come across as guarded and mild-mannered, don't take it personally.

6/13/2016 8:59 AM View respondent's answers Are you discouraged? **I have had some discouraging moments. But as a whole, No, I am not discouraged. I hear Jesus saying, "I've got this. Be faithful."**

I feel great years are ahead of me. I'm feeling my 31 years of pastoral ministry catching up with me. I need to find the fire and what will trigger me to be a Father, Husband, Pastor, and Friend as a 55 year old because I've never lived this long before! Seriously though, I still like seeing and supporting people in their growth – personally, spiritually, and spiritually. I like having new challenges and often I am most satisfied with my work when I am involved in exciting projects.

6/12/2016 2:02 PM View respondent's answers Besides being in a holding pattern, where is the United Methodist Church (UMC) heading? It seems like just a matter of time for the LGBTQ agenda to be pushed/adopted/accepted by the UMC. Should we be addressing our affiliation sooner rather than later in regards to this issue? What options are there for NTUMC to take? **I think a split is inevitable. What that split looks like is cloudy. One of the biggest developments at our 2016 General Conference was the liberal side began talking about leaving the UMC, when previously it was the conservative side talking about an amicable exit. No, the adoption of the LGBTQ agenda by the UMC is not a done deal.**

I don't think we need to take any action on our affiliation. In terms of ministry [and we can always improve] we are in line with the plain reading of Scripture, and the Discipline. Any pressure we feel is pressure we are getting from society trends and putting on ourselves.

Options are for churches, pastors, and congregations to decide whether or not to remain in the connection and be a conservative presence and voice, or exit. No exit process has been established.

What practical effects will be felt with the staff changes that are taking place? **The church family needs to step up to do the necessary planning and implementation of ministry.**

6/12/2016 11:35 AM View respondent's answers What is the cause, and what is your response to the high turnover of church staff in recent years? **We have had staff turnover since 2012. First, there is no single cause. Turnover is usual and expected. People follow their values. People go where they believe the Lord is guiding them, and that creates openings and turnover. People do what they have to do provide for themselves and their families, and that creates openings and turnover. And, there is usually another opportunity out there that pays better, has more preferable hours, or offers better benefits. Some staff knew that they would be here for only a season so turnover was anticipated. Not every person who is paid to work in a church sees it as their life's work. Some turnover occurred as a result of adopting a new organizational chart with Simple Church model.**

Here is my response. Changes must come when the church gets out of balance. I arrived June 2014. We hired two people in the fall of 2014 (Executive Director and a significant salary increase for the Director of Worship) knowing our AWA [average Sunday worship attendance] dropped from 366 to 330. We didn't have a plan to pay for the extra salaries. Our plan was to make the hires and hope the finances would follow. It didn't. I take my share of responsibility for that.

My response was to work hard in 2015 for a turnaround. LB and I made a plea for increased giving in March 2015 and you responded with two super months. Our AWA dropped from 330 in 2014 to 282 in 2015. So I initiated the recommendation of the two recent staff cuts. I hurt over this, too.

6/12/2016 9:38 AM View respondent's answers Has your salary and benefits been cut like the other members of the staff? **The pastor's salary took the first hit in 2014. Let me start at the beginning. In 2013 the pastor's salary was \$79,990. It was reduced in 2014 to \$75,990 for Pastor David. In spring**

of 2014 – because there would be a change of pastors and knowing some had left and anticipating others might – it was reduced to \$70,000 for me. So the decrease has \$4,000+ \$5,990 = \$9,990.

Salary, pension, and health benefits for clergy are figured differently than church-hired staff. The Charge Conference sets the pastor's salary and it takes a Charge Conference to alter it.

The salary determines the church's portion of my pension. I determine my personal contribution.

For health coverage, the church's portion is decided at the annual conference level and given to us in the fall in time for budget planning. The annual conference determines the portion I pay.

6/12/2016 8:19 AM View respondent's answers Do you enjoy the contemporary worship style of NTUMC or would you prefer a more traditional use of hymnals? If you could serve any church, would it be a traditional, contemporary, or blended. **Blended. I have not forced my personal preference upon you. I think there is a place for hymnals. It's a tool. A resource. I like them but I don't think we have to be dependent on them in order to have good and acceptable worship to Jesus.**

I am passionate about good worship. We've done ourselves, the not-yet Christians, the unreached, and the new Christians and mature Christians a disservice by insisting there are only two kinds of worshipers, traditional and contemporary, and that everyone has to choose one camp or the other. Or worse, that there is only one kind of worship music. Our musical tastes should not dictate how we worship, our theology does. That's why I will not force my style and preference on you but I will lead with my theology of worship. My theology includes that this is ultimately God's house and that experiencing the presence of the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit is primary. He wants fellowship with you! With us!

The range, power, and truth in music to worship Christ did not find its absolute zenith in Gregorian chants, Beethoven, the Wesleys, or spirituals and it has not found its complete culmination in southern gospel, Matt Redmon, Hillsong or Bethel. ALL OF IT TOGETHER IS NEEDED. GOD INHABITS THE PRAISES OF ALL HIS PEOPLE, NOT JUST ONE SEGMENT AND NOT JUST ONE FORM OF PRAISE. THEY ARE PIECES TO SAME PUZZLE, INGREDIENTS IN THE SAME RECIPE. JUST AS ALL HANDS ARE NEEDED TO BRING IN THE NET FULL OF FISH, SO ALL THE MUSIC AND ARTS CAN BE USEFUL IN WORSHIP TO CHRIST AND EMPOWERING THAT FELLOWSHIP INCLUDING THE HYMNS, SONGS, BALLADS, AND PSALMS BEING WRITTEN BY PEOPLE ACROSS THE WORLD AND SPECTRUM OF MUSIC WHO MAY NEVER CUT A CD, NEVER BE ON YOU TUBE, NEVER BE HEARD ON K-LOVE, OR GAIN FORTUNE AND FAME BY WORSHIP CONCERTS. THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS Poured HIMSELF OUT AND INTO ALL FLESH, AND HE WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO UNTIL JESUS CHRIST COMES AGAIN.

6/12/2016 7:54 AM View respondent's answers Will the congregation be called to a corporate prayer and fasting for the situation of the church? **We have a 24/7 Week of Prayer July 17-23 and I will think about a time of prayer and fasting in that. I know its importance. But just as much I will challenge you to reach out to your church family that is discouraged or absent. If you know them, let them know you miss them. If you do *not* know them, still let them know you have missed their company. I know how hard it is for some of you to do that. Can you approach it as if you have just learned you have a long-lost relative that you've never met, and you are excited to finally meet them?**

6/11/2016 7:40 PM View respondent's answers What are your intentions for staying at New Town? **If the Lord is gracious, I have 10-12 years of pastoral service until retirement. Only God knows how much of that will be at New Town.**

6/11/2016 4:53 PM View respondent's answers What do you think NTUMC will be like next year at this time? **I think our strong ministries will be stronger, and we will have done a better job of getting outside our doors and raising our visibility in the community. I think worship attendance will increase and be more vibrant. I think we will be better balanced financially.**

6/11/2016 1:30 PM View respondent's answers 1) Why do we not send out all mission work volunteer opportunities, like *From His Hands* and sign up sheets, to the entire congregation in the email? We would probably get more participation. **We send out numerous Sign-Up Geniuses with many of our ministries. We used to pass sign up sheets in the sanctuary on Sundays. We will not return to that. Here's what you can do: Send your request to Donna Grannan. Ask her to put you in touch with the volunteer leader or staff person. She will gladly point you in the right direction. Some recruit helpers so there is no need for a sign up sheet. *From His Hands* is never mentioned in the church bulletin or emails. It is in today's bulletin. Lois Demerich did such a fantastic job heading *From His Hands* and recruiting people until she and Phil relocated to GA that we did not use a sign up sheet. She handled it.** 2) More financial information would keep the congregation more aware of our needs and short falls. **The subFinance team of LB is working on providing that financial information.**

6/11/2016 8:54 AM View respondent's answers What is the most important thing to you about being at New Town? **The emphasis on experiencing God's presence. And, you, the church family.**

6/11/2016 6:05 AM View respondent's answers What are you doing personally to improve the "community" feel for attendees? (Community of believers and attendees). **Greeting and speaking with them. Being available to them. Introducing them to you.**

6/10/2016 10:05 PM View respondent's answers I don't feel like I have any real idea of the big picture at New Town. There seems to be a lot of pride that we are "different" from other UMC churches in town but I haven't ever heard an official version of what those differences are. **We have not written our distinctiveness into an official statement.** Are we different on purpose? **Yes.** What are the issues that make us different? **We offer a form of worship that is unlike any other UMC within a 30-minute radius. We have 70-75% of our AWA in small groups. No other UMC in the area comes close. We have an openness to believers with a charismatic or Pentecostal background not found in area UMC's. We are known as being intentionally conservative and evangelical.**

We have new members sign a Membership Covenant which is aligned with our mission statement with includes specific expectations. UMC's usually receive a person by transfer of membership after meeting with the Pastor or taking a membership class. There is an agreement with grace of the expectations of members. NTUMC extends the same grace but has not accepted Membership Transfers in the past. Attendance in a membership class is mandatory and exceptions are very, very few. Is our stand on those issues still working for us? I think so. It's some of the things which make us

unique. Most churches have some form of membership class or event. Our “method” is the Following Jesus class, and we offer several ways to do it, including a weekend event, and a weekly class. We have had requests to put our membership class on our web site as an option where people can turn in their own work at their own pace, then meet with the Pastor to finalize everything.

All of us know the value of fellowship and learning together in person. We have been a stickler for taking the class in person and asking for that investment of time for that spiritual development. We offer child care, and we hold the class when other things are occurring at the church. We know it takes a commitment and that it is a real challenge for many people to carve out the time along with work schedules, kid’s activities, and personal time. We believe it is worth the investment of your time. Should our methods and strategies change? As long as the mission remains the same.

6/10/2016 7:49 PM View respondent's answers Do you pick and choose the types of events you attend at the church? **Yes.**

What is ahead for youth ministry? **I believe Jesus wants a great youth ministry here and He is the One who makes it happen. He will do that if He is at the core. I’m committed to supporting a strong Youth ministry that will continue to be a leader in our area and in the Virginia Conference. I want it to get even better.** How are we to keep our youth engaged? **Jesus is willing. We have to do our part. In my experience, the parents must make it THE priority, and the youth have to take some ownership.**

6/10/2016 7:40 PM View respondent's answers Are you willing to discuss & help us navigate the social & political turmoil facing our nation with solid scriptural foundation? **Yes.**

6/10/2016 5:01 PM View respondent's answers Can we open the door to guest speakers and events? **Yes. I have some thoughts about that and would like to hear yours.**

6/10/2016 4:53 PM View respondent's answers What do you think are our strengths? **A desire to know the Bible. Prayer. A personal daily walk and devotion to Jesus Christ and to live holy lives pleasing to him. I believe you care about people.** In what ways do you think our body needs to grow spiritually? What are our weaknesses? **Too many people are under giving, under involved, and under committed.** Where do you feel led to lead us? **Worship, prayer, and strengthening the local church.** I would like to see us go a little deeper into the things of God and a little deeper into worship. **I feel led to create a place where God feels free to go deeper into us.**

6/10/2016 3:51 PM View respondent's answers What would it take to restore staff to full time including Youth leader position? **\$351,708.**

What is your view of spiritual gifts including prophetic gifts and healing? **I’m for them. Perhaps you missed my recent series on Hearing God and Prophecy March 30th – April 27th on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights?** Why don’t we spend as much time on these as we used to? **These are some of my predecessor’s favorite ministries. He emphasized and practiced them often and was very competent in them. I think they are important, too. My level of emphasis, experience, and competence is lower than his, but I’m growing.**

What are your top 3 priorities for New Town? **Worship. Spiritual development. Stewardship with financial stability . Community Outreach. All need to be integrated. Sorry, I don't count well!**

Thank you for your great questions! To conclude, my question for everyone is:

What gifts do I have – spiritual, personal, financial, intellectual, community contacts, and others – that I can invest in the success of this new season of ministry?