1. **What would you name as the strengths of your congregation and its ministry? List evidence of health (physical and spiritual) in the life of your pastor(s) and congregation(s)?**

The congregation of FUMC strives to intentionally embrace our mission, vision, and core values. Many people consider our focus on missions and our willingness to serve in our community and surrounding areas to be one of our strongest areas, as well as being a warm, friendly, and welcoming congregation. We have active participation and growth in our traditional and contemporary worship services. We have expanded our efforts in multigenerational leadership, which include communion helpers, greeters, readers, anointing stations, and lay speakers. Visitors and new members comment that FUMC-G is a very welcoming, friendly, and open-minded church family that desires to reach out and model radical hospitality in all that we do. We now invite new visitors to a “Meet and Greet” after both services once a month and we also offer Live Streaming for both the 9AM and 11AM worship services.

Our Sunday School classes continue to thrive for all ages, including 5 adult classes. Music ministry with chancel choir, praise team, and youth praise team enhance worship and many other areas of church life. As a prayer focused church, our members are given a weekly congregational prayer focus for a community organization or group.

We have many types of programs that involve people giving their time, talents, and resources to helping others. We have very active Life Groups (6 currently), meeting in homes, nurturing mutual accountability, spiritual friendships, and spiritual growth. We continue to expand spiritual formation and discipleship offerings, which include a Discovery class, which is offered twice each year, Financial Peace University, eleven prayer groups, bible studies, and seasonal studies that correspond with Pastor Kevin’s sermon series.

We have thriving children’s ministry with new programs in worship and arts, kids on a mission, and a new offering during our 9AM service called “Wiggler Worship.” This year, we made the commitment to enhance our youth program, and increased the part-time Youth Director to a full-time position. The youth program was renamed Refuge. We also completed a renovation to the upstairs youth area, and now have a Refuge Youth Ministry Commons area. We send and financially support K-5 children to attend Camp Chestnut Ridge in the summer. Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts meet regularly in a house behind the church, which FUMC-Graham owns. Our playschool has an excellent reputation in our county, and serves approximately 140 preschool children. Once a year in the fall, our children lead worship. It is one of our most moving services — seeing children with their enthusiastic faith leading adults in worship and music. In the spring, our youth group leads worship. It is very gratifying to see 25 to 30 teenagers lead the worship, give testimony, and lead the congregation in music.

Our United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men are actively involved in many areas of our church and community. FUMC Women were recently recognized as a Mission Today 7-star unit, and we have 3, 7-star members. They give supplies and funds to the Women’s Crisis Center and Women’s Shelter, as well as supplies and funds to the Homeless Shelter. They sponsor a fall bazaar each year. Both UMW and UMM support youth scholarships.

FUMC is very proud to continue offering scholarships to high school seniors and college students. This year, we were able to give scholarships to students, presented by Sunday School classes, UMW, UMM, and individuals.

We are a very mission-focused congregation, with one of our core values stating that *‘we are passionately committed to hands-on mission that changes the lives of our neighbors far and near and ourselves in the process.*’ FUMC has a Habitat Team that works with Habitat for Humanity. Pastor Kevin leads a jail chaplain ministry team at the Alamance County Detention Center which includes five rotating chaplains that see approximately 40 inmates a month. We host the Exchange Club, which supports ‘at risk’ youth and their families. Since 1999, we have supported the Andrean Rural Health Care Program in Bolivia. This year an advanced special was sent to the Andrean program.

FUMC’s Senior Pastor, Director of Children and Discipleship Ministries and Worship Leader participated in a Community Concert for Peace held recently in downtown Graham to celebrate peace in word and song. Every month, nine members visit and serve communion to 33 members who are shut-ins and in nursing homes.

The senior pastor and staff are actively working on healthy life styles including observing Sabbath weekly. We offer a First-Place bible study focusing on healthy living and weight loss. Our pastor recharges, renews and plans future sermon series for several months with two three day retreats a year.

1. **Where do you see your Pastor and Church living out the mission statement of the NCC: Healthy Congregations and Effective Leaders in Every Place Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World?**

We continue to empower and seed new LIFE groups each year. Part of the DNA of these groups is to empower new disciples to grow in their confidence and willingness to expand participation and leadership, seeding new groups as they grow and continue to invite friends, family and neighbors. We also firmly believe that all of the baptized are called into ministry, so it is our calling to help each disciple discern their gifts in ways that allow them to serve God and our community.

1. **Share a story of God's Generosity involving the church and pastor.**

Families in need of emergency support (often financial), have been discreetly helped by Pastor Kevin using our Pastor’s Discretionary Fund. It is regularly replenished by members giving second-mile gifts to help meet such needs.

Those who are not financially able to tithe or move toward the tithe due to hardship often express ways they can “tithe their time and talents,” going above and beyond to serve and assist the church in our various mission and ministry efforts.

As mentioned above, we also took a great step of faith this year, expanding our ministry budget to move to a full-time youth director. Our stewardship team has used letters and videography to communicate the impact of our giving on lives and ministry in the community. We are praising God that our year-to-date tithes and offerings are up 13% from the previous year.

1. **Describe the most recent ten years in which the congregation finds itself with regards to their size and financial condition. What parts of your recent history would be helpful for the Cabinet to know as they consider the best pastoral leader for your congregation and offer resources to strengthen your ministry? (Please include as a part of your response the average worship attendance for the last 3 years as well as naming any years in which apportionments were paid at 100%. We encourage you to narrate any particular projects that have marked your congregation as well as share reasons for gaining/losing members).**

Over the last three years our congregation has become very diverse in a great and Godly way. The people who comprise the congregation are loyal and committed disciples of Christ. Through Pastor Kevin’s guidance he has instilled this in the entire congregation. Pastoral needs for this congregation must include effective leadership with both contemporary and traditional worship that is passionate and participatory. In addition, we desire leadership that can guide us to reach out to a culturally diverse community, encouraging the growth of diverse membership which also reaches out to young families and couples. We have multi-generational activities designed to reach a broad spectrum of ages. We also have very active children and youth ministries. Leadership in this context must be missional and committed to keeping a pulse on both the congregation and the larger needs of our surrounding community.

Attendance:
2012: high (392), low (221), average (292) / 100% apportionments paid

2013: high (466), low (213), average (313) / 100% apportionments paid

2014: high (478), low (222), average (313) / 100% apportionments paid

2015: high (422), low (163), average (289) / 100% apportionments paid

2016: high (422), low (225), average (298) / 100% apportionments paid

**2017: high (431), low (226), average (280) / 100% apportionments paid (YTD Totals through Oct.; 2017 is also our first full year of Live Streaming with an avg. of 27 unique views each Sunday, bringing our total worship avg. to 307)**

1. **Describe your local community, including schools. What are the strengths of your local community, and what are some of its greatest needs. How closely does your church reflect your community (racially, economically, politically)? How are you engaged in your community, particularly in schools, to participate in mission with children and their families? How are you working in partnership with other congregations?**

Graham is a very racially diverse community with a large percentage of poverty within a five-mile radius of the church. We discovered in a season of discernment that there was a need for cheap, safe, and fun entertainment for impoverished families with young children. This has led us to offer family fun days once or twice a year that are open to the entire community with free bounce houses, snow cones, hot dogs, games, and interaction with church members and new neighbors. During our recent Trunk or Treat event 1,000 children and adults attended and we fed 800 a hot dog meal.

For the past two years, we have also engaged in a partnership with the Family Center of Alamance County (Exchange Club) in a program that works with at-risk youth (often court-appointed) and their parents/guardians to help provide training, support, life-skills, and relationship skills. Parents and their youth come each week to our church where they are trained by the Family Center and hosted by volunteers from our church who provide food, prayer, support, and other assistance.

Our church has adopted an elementary school (see our C4C response in question 9 below). A joint worship service is beginning this month where parishioners from FUMC-Graham and First Baptist Missionary Church for a monthly service at Peak Nursing Home in Graham as a Christian outreach.

1. **How would you describe the convictional stance of your congregation: theology, prejudices, spiritual life? Can you share an example of ways in which your congregation has engaged in conversation around a difficult or controversial topic? In what ways are you teaching, embodying, and expressing unity in your congregation?**

We continue to use Bible-based teaching in Sunday School, bible studies, life groups and sermons which address topics such as peace, racial reconciliation, conflict transformation, justice, and a Wesleyan understanding of discipleship with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines and mutual accountability.

Our congregation also recently partnered with First Missionary Baptist Church in Graham and now collaborates in shared studies, worship at Peak Resources Nursing Home, and other events to help build relationships with this historic African American congregation.

1. **How are you developing pastoral and congregational leadership?**

Pastor Kevin is an engaging and empowering leader at FUMC. He leads by example at church and is well-known in the community, region and state. Kevin encourages members to be leaders and helps to equip them with leadership skills in the church.

1. **Are there any other circumstances of which you would like to make the Cabinet aware?**

No.

1. **Is your church engaged in outreach/ministry with a local school? [Select \/]
If yes, please describe.**

FUMCG has participated in the C4C initiative since the Fall of 2015. We have formed a solid partnership with South Graham Elementary supporting the students and their families as well as faculty and staff through a variety of outreach efforts.

Outreach Initiatives:

* Panda Packs: We provide food backpacks to students at risk for food insecurity, serving 40-50 students per week. During the 2016-17 school year, we distributed 1,321 backpacks. We have partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank of NC to purchase pre-packaged food packs. A group of 20 volunteers pack and distribute the backpacks on Thursdays to classrooms after school hours to facilitate teachers in distribution.
* Panda Movers: We have 10 volunteers who assist with the delivery and storage of the food backpacks in the food pantry trailer at the school.
* Panda Buddies: We have 13 volunteers serving as mentor/tutors for 19 children weekly. One of our Buddies works with an entire classroom of students weekly. Our Panda Buddy program has been a huge success providing positive adult role models for these children and building excellent mentoring relationships.
* Panda Pantry: During the 2016-17 school year, we partnered with Dream Align Ministries (local food bank) to staff a monthly food pantry for families of SGE students. 14 FUMCG volunteers distributed a donation of turkeys and fixings for 100 families in Nov. 2016 and will assist with the 2017 event this November.
* Library Buddies: The SGE Library Team includes 15 volunteers. Nine volunteers assist the school librarian each week to shelve the 500+ books that are checked out each week. Volunteers also assist with book fairs, yearly inventory and other library projects. FUMCG donated a book to every student at the start of the 2017 school year to encourage reading at home and improve literacy goals.
* Garden Helpers: An FUMCG volunteer provided consultation as a Master Gardener when the school staff planned and planted a school garden with vegetables and plants. The garden is used by all grade levels for science activities and adds to the beautification of the school. FUMCG volunteers support periodic workdays to weed, mulch and plant in the garden.
* Clothing and Coat Closet Helpers: An FUMCG volunteer maintains a clothing closet at the school stocking underwear and sweatpants for student emergencies. FUMCG donates the clothing items. A church wide coat drive collected approximately 60 coats for distribution to students. FUMCG Praise Kids collected hats, scarves and mittens and delivered them to the school during the Advent season.

Other highlights:

School Supplies: Congregation generously donated school supplies of all types and a closet was stocked at the school, allowing teachers to pick up needed items throughout the school year.

Scholarship Fund: The FUMCG Missions Team and the C4C Team have supported the development of a scholarship fund to pay for field trip fees for students unable to cover the required fees. This will allow these students to attend these important learning activities.

Teacher Morale: Volunteers provide food for the Holiday Faculty meeting. A Sunday School class distributed a thank you note and treat bag in February 2017 to improve morale.

Watchdog Program: We are exploring ways to set up a Watchdog program to encourage Dad’s to be involved in the school day. Preparations are underway to hopefully implement the program this winter.

Teacher Boxes: Vacation Bible School kids raised funds for purchasing snacks and classroom supplies. Our Praise Kids packed and delivered a tote box full of snacks and supplies to each teacher at SGE. The teachers loved this!

Snacks: Due to the small cafeteria size, there are long time spans between breakfast and lunch for some classrooms. To keep the students focused, classrooms have snack time, but many children are unable to bring snacks from home. To save teachers buying snacks out of their own tight budgets, FUMCG is assisting with snack donations. We have provided snacks for 8 classrooms with as many as 64 children being served. A monthly donation has been given to each classroom based on their needs.

Parent Involvement: We have made connections with the PTO and participate in their monthly board meetings. We have been invited by the principal to represent the community on the SGE School Improvement Team.