

Lake Center Bible Church Long Range Planning Committee

Final Report October, 2006

The Long Range Planning Committee was created by the Board of Elders in August 2004, and was charged “to create an innovative long-range plan that envelopes the values and distinctives of Lake Center, focusing on a ministry that continues to make and develop disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Three subcommittees were formed: Survey, Demographics, and Facilities.

Area Demographics

The Committee reviewed minutes and reports from the previous (1997) Long Range Planning Committee, and determined that demographically little had changed in our area; it was deemed that a new external demographic consultant or study was not warranted.

The Committee reviewed similar studies and reports from churches both within and outside the immediate area. These proved useful in setting direction of inquiry. Census Bureau information available from the city, county, and Chamber of Commerce were obtained and reviewed. These indicated the south county area was growing, with several new developments planned. Culture, income, and other demographics all pointed to continued solid middle-class, family, suburban environment.

Additionally, radio station genres and market share were obtained and reviewed. The three largest in the area are secular pop, classic rock, and country, each with 30% - 40% market share. Several area churches have styled their music to appeal to the first two. The third predominant style has been generally shunned by area churches.

Mission Statement

The existing mission statement was determined to be accurate but generic enough to fit almost any area church of like faith (“Make disciples of Jesus Christ who Celebrate the Glory of God, Communicate the Word of God, Care for the People of God.” Thus the Committee developed and recommended to the Elders a new mission statement for Lake Center. The new mission statement adopted by the Elders is: “We are an intergenerational church committed to Living Timeless Truth, Passionately Worshiping Christ, Sacrificially Serving Others, all in a culturally relevant way.”

Facilities

The Facilities subcommittee determined that, while we would eventually outgrow the present facility, the urgent need for a new roof could not wait, and conveyed that recommendation to the Elders.

Focus shifted to space requirements, allocation, and layout. While the auditorium would be sufficient for a church up to 800 - 1,000, there were several areas that could not support that level of growth:

1. As the preschool numbers increase, the square footage needed also increases, requiring relocation and expansion of those areas.
2. Sunday School classrooms are at a premium. Expanding needs for preschool and elementary have

- squeezed out adult classes, and will probably continue to do so.
3. Parking will become a major issue, and may well limit us, based on statistical averages of number of people per car, parking lot density, etc. An even more limiting factor is the existing driveway with one lane in / one lane out; it is doubtful the city would permit significant expansion of the driveway or creation of additional egress from the parking lot. Parking and egress issues may well limit us to average attendance of approximately 750.
 4. The existing layout of the buildings and rooms can be confusing to new people.
 5. Building codes have become more complex and demanding over the years. While the present structure is “grandfathered” in, any substantial expansion or remodeling could require the entire facility be brought up to current codes.

Facilities Recommendations

By April 2005, the Committee recommended to the Elders:

1. Maximize the present facility, including aesthetics by October 2005
2. Either add to the current facility or acquire additional land (at least 20 acres) by 2008.
3. Complete addition or new construction, occupying by 2010.

As we learned more of Portage’s building codes, the Committee became convinced that Lake Center should relocate, especially after learning that expansion costs on the current property would probably come to \$200 per square foot (largely due to having to bring the current facility up to various codes) versus \$100 per square foot for new construction. Towards this end, the Committee met jointly with the Elders and two different architectural consultant firms.

Therefore the Committee recommends Lake Center relocating:

- Acquire property between 20 and 50 acres somewhere in the area bounded by Portage, Vicksburg, and Schoolcraft.
- The site plan must allow for considerable expansion iterations.
- The site plan must continue to allow for primary parking visible from the street to give the community the concept that “there’s always something going on at Lake Center.”
- A multi-purpose auditorium should have moveable seating for around 700 - 750, allowing for a minimum 22" per seat as opposed to older 18" and 20" standards.
- We should always plan on two Sunday morning services to allow our people to “worship one, serve one.”
- There should be a large foyer, probably at least as large as the auditorium. A full commercial kitchen should be adjacent. There should be plenty of space and areas to encourage mingling.
- An office wing and Christian Education wing should be designed so as to enhance traffic through the foyer, again to foster interaction.
- The long-range plan, as Lake Center grows, is to create separate venues or “annexes.” Each would have a distinctive worship style and small-congregation feel. The Senior Pastor’s sermon would be videoconferenced into each venue. To counter the danger of not knowing others normally attending different venues, it is considered critical that the large foyer be the traffic focus of each.

Surveys

The committee postulated there were 5 factors that make Lake Center unique:

1. Bible-based, expository preaching
2. Training of members into full-time ministry
3. Consisting primarily of middle class attendees
4. Intergenerational
5. A sense of community.

An initial survey was developed and distributed to the congregation in September 2004, with several objectives:

- Determine basic demographics of the church
- Validate or determine other distinctives of Lake Center
- Determine how the congregation viewed the church, particularly regarding balance of the five church types described by Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Church*.

That survey was distributed in October 2004, tallied, the results provided to the Elders, and a summary given to the congregation in the church's annual report in January 2005.

A second congregational survey was developed, distributed in May 2006, and tallied. The report from that survey was sent to the Elders in September 2006. While there are several areas, two of the most noteworthy were

- There is a large disparity between those saying they know their spiritual gifts and those saying they're using them. There is a similar disparity between those saying they are aware of service opportunities and those saying they are serving at least occasionally.
- The character and distinctives of Lake Center have changed radically in 18 months between the surveys. From the first survey, Lake Center was considered to be weak in evangelism and strong in teaching. 18 months later, teaching is the next-to-last perception of Lake Center (of five) – it was the only factor to decline. Perception of worship has increased the most, followed by evangelism and fellowship. Community and social conscience significantly trailed the others in both surveys, although its perception also increased substantially.
- The factors attracting people to Lake Center and the factors continuing to attract them change in relative ranking, especially among those with more than 50 mentions:
 - Initial: Preaching (96), Friendliness (82), Doctrine / Bible focus (64)
 - Retention: Friendliness (101), Preaching (98), Opportunity to serve (83), Fellowship (81), Doctrine / Bible Focus (73), Worship (71), and Feels like home (57)
- Written comments indicate ongoing concern with balancing styles of music and worship. These comments came from each age group except, curiously, those over 60 who made no comments.

Summary

The Long Range Planning Committee fulfilled its charge.

- The new Mission Statement reflects the distinctives and heritage of Lake Center Bible Church.
- The initial survey generated many changes at Lake Center. The second survey both confirms those steps and may point to future steps.
- The Committee has recommended a larger campus and design considerations for a new building.