

Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church

Report of the Study Committee

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The Fellowship Hall at Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church (LTUMC) was built in the late 1970's. The building is a simple rectangular wood frame construction building which has served the church very well for more than 40 years. The building needs some significant repairs such as a new roof and an interior refurbishment which has caused some to question whether the building should be dramatically overhauled or even completely replaced.

The Administrative Council of LTUMC has decided to investigate the viability and costs of a refurbished or new Fellowship Hall that would be designed and constructed with a view of the needs for the church covering 10 to 15 years out or more. To pursue this endeavor LTUMC will follow the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. The first step of the book of discipline is to appoint a Study Committee to study the needs of the community and church, potential for membership and attendance growth, impact on various church programs and accessibility. The Study Committee is to compile its findings into a report. This document is the Report of the Study Committee.

Needs Analysis of Community and Church

Community

The real estate markets in the surrounding communities have been booming for the last several years. Today real estate inventory is at low levels not experienced in many years and prices are at all-time highs. A typical buyer in the area has a high socio-economic lifestyle, and most have retired from their full-time careers. The Covid-19 pandemic seems to have accelerated the real estate market as buyers take flight from more densely populated areas and move to rural low populated areas where social clubs and golf courses abound. Historically, homeowners in the area have primarily been seasonal residents that own primary homes in warmer climates like Florida but the numbers that are choosing to be fulltime residents are increasing. This real estate boom is not restricted to the club communities but seems to be involving all properties.

The clubs in the communities where they exist take care of their community's needs such as social activities, hobbies, dining, special interest group needs, meeting facilities, etc. However, the clubs are seasonal and are typically open only six months of year, May through October. Additionally, Lake Toxaway and Sapphire are large communities which go way outside the

boundaries of the clubs. Therefore, outside of the club communities there are needs for facilities that can be available for meetings of various members of the community and sometimes even within the club communities there are needs for facilities that are not met by the clubs. These might include art club, garden clubs, property owner association meeting, civic meetings, weddings and funerals. The only facilities in the area that can be used for these needs are a couple of community centers and church buildings. For many years, LTUMC has opened the doors of their Fellowship Hall to meet the needs of the community for small group meetings. Today, the number of these outside groups that use the facilities of LTUMC is small, currently only 3 to 5 organizations leading one to conclude that other facilities and venues are more appealing.

Weddings and funerals seem to be different. The historical structure of our sanctuary makes the church an appealing venue for a wedding however, the Fellowship Hall facilities are very limited and not really suited for a wedding. There is only one bathroom which is a problem for brides and bridesmaids as they prepare for the ceremony, not to mention the groom and groomsmen. As for funerals, the bathrooms are also limitations or at least inconveniences as well. Both weddings and funerals usually include children, making the bathroom limitations an even bigger problem.

Many of the school children in the area are from impoverished homes and in many cases, they do not have internet connections. Schools are pushing ahead with the use of technology including laptops for the children, but for the children to get the most benefit from the laptops, they need an internet connection. Any upgrade of the Fellowship Hall should include a separate public internet connection which children can access from the parking lot. A sign with access instructions can be posted and the local school notified so that the children are aware of the availability of public connection. The children can then get their parents to take them to the parking lot where they can upload or download assignments and schoolwork.

Bringing LTUMC and the overall community together through these outreach efforts is one way to establish and maintain awareness of the church in the community but perhaps the best way is through neighbor-to-neighbor contact. Full time residents in the area are growing and many of these full-time residents are moving into the same neighborhoods where current members of LTUMC already live, and in many cases if they are not moving into the neighborhood, then they are joining the same clubs. If current members would just make a point of talking about LTUMC and inviting neighbors and club members to visit, then a growing congregation would be a certainty. In whatever way visits occur, the Fellowship Hall building must be appealing and an inviting venue with nice amenities and comfortable surroundings otherwise it will go unfrequented and unnoticed by the community.

Church

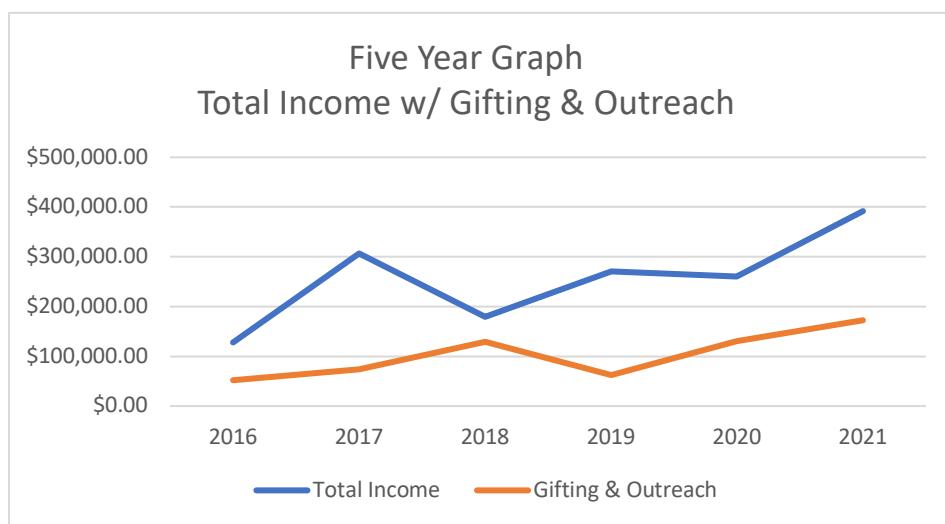
Around the community of Sapphire, NC and Toxaway, NC, LTUMC is the only mainline church available without driving to Cashiers (14 miles) or Brevard (17 miles). The other churches in the

area are either independent Baptist churches or evangelical churches of numerous backgrounds. As a result, LTUMC has a congregation that is a mixed bag of congregants that come from many different mainline church traditions. At LTUMC there are members that have church backgrounds of Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, Baptist and Catholic. LTUMC needs to leverage its position of being the only mainline church in the local area by expanding programs that let residents know that the church is here and extending invitations to residents of all church backgrounds to come, visit, and participate in worship at LTUMC.

The growth of new and fulltime residents in the community is a significant opportunity for LTUMC growth as well. The new residents have similar profiles when compared to the congregants of LTUMC but generally, they are younger since they are more recently retired. Most of the congregants that come to LTUMC reside either in Burlingame or in the Lake Toxaway Estates communities or surrounding communities which are all seeing significant growth. Our congregants are mature, usually retired but some are still working. Most of the attendees are seasonal and spend the winter in other locations, typically Florida and they are only in the area for the summer but once again, the population of full-time residents is growing.

LTUMC does not have regularly attending families with children. The membership is older and more likely to be grandparents. Frequently, grandchildren are in attendance but not enough for LTUMC to offer a Sunday School program for kids.

LTUMC is a committed outreach church, where leadership is committed to giving 50% or more of every dollar received in contributions back to outreach, primarily within the local community. LTUMC has a healthy balance sheet which puts LTUMC in a position to act when there is an opportunity to make a big impact in the community without putting pressure on congregants. New congregants are encouraged when they learn about our healthy balance sheet and that there is no ongoing capital campaign or annual pledge program. Even so, our congregation is generous with their giving which will total almost \$400,000 in 2021.



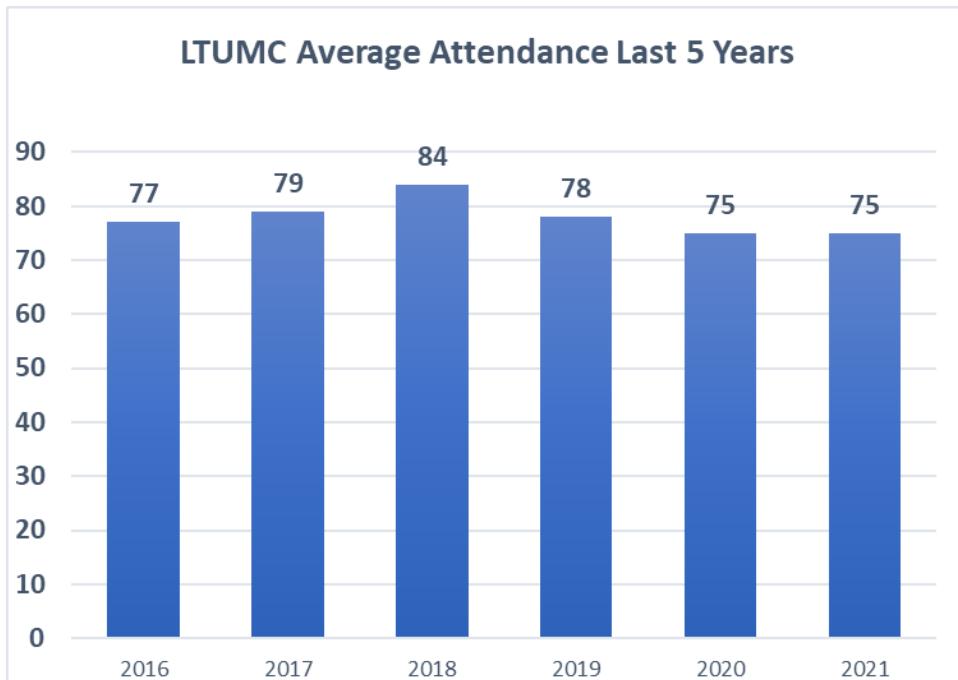
LTUMC is responsive to giving when an issue is identified. In the chart above, giving peaked in 2017 to \$300k in response to the need for a new organ. An actual capital campaign was never launched but instead the need was simply mentioned from the pulpit. As a result, in that year designated gifts soared to \$75k which was more than sufficient to procure the \$44k organ. The example of the organ is an order of magnitude less than a new building, but it is a good example of the readily available giving capacity at LTUMC. There is every reason to believe that congregants will be very responsive to a well thought out and planned capital campaign to significantly improve the church campus.

LTUMC needs to be careful with any planned capital campaign, such as one that might be required for a new or renovated Fellowship Hall. Communications of the need should be very transparent and prayerful which hopefully will result in numerous early unsolicited or lightly solicited gifts which will fund a significant portion of the project. LTUMC should be willing to commit a portion of its reserves to funding the project which should cover a large fraction of the underwriting. Any continuing capital campaign to complete the funding of the project should not be aggressive and any member that feels stressed for any reason to contribute to the campaign should not be pressured in any way. A capital campaign run in this way will preserve the value of “no pressure giving” at LTUMC which has been a long-standing practice that is appreciated by its congregants.

LTUMC has studied improvements to the church buildings previously with the most recent study concluding in 2013. That study looked at expanding the historical sanctuary and upgrading the Fellowship Hall building. When that study was presented to the congregation for a vote, it was voted down. The primary reason that the project was not supported was because the congregants felt strongly about leaving the historical sanctuary alone and untouched. Given the strong sentiment for the preservation of the historical sanctuary as it is, the Study Committee has deemed that the historical sanctuary is out of scope for this project.

Membership and Attendance

The actual conventional (congregants in the seats) attendance at LTUMC has suffered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020 LTUMC invested time and money into a live streaming system and many congregants began worshipping through the livestream which has continued through 2021. The following chart shows the average attendance record over five years with 2021 including the views of the livestream. For the most part, attendance, including livestream, is flat varying between 75 to 85.



Notes:

- 1) 2020 attendance, impacted by COVID-19, is the sum of church attendance plus, online views which are counted as one person per view but are most likely more.
- 2) Membership has remained flat over the same time period, varying between 101 to 107.

Ron Geyer of Good City Architects in Greenville, SC has significant experience with church architecture and expansion programs. He advised LTUMC that church attendance usually plateaus at around 80% capacity of the sanctuary. With the LTUMC sanctuary capacity being around 100, this appears to be what is happening to attendance. LTUMC is now able to move to two services during the summer season and the Study Committee believes LTUMC should plan for two services as soon as the pandemic allows so that attendance can increase accordingly.

Programs of Ministry

Worship and Fellowship Programs

Worship is a strength of LTUMC. Although it is currently limited to one service per week, our pastor, Marcus Dodson, gets high marks for our worship services. Our worship is a traditional service and is highlighted by Charlie Steele, exceptional organist (new to LTUMC but longtime organist for other churches). LTUMC is fortunate to have a highly experienced pastor to preach spiritually mature sermons. Our pastor is only 25% time, and he works full time at the regional hospital in Brevard as an incoming patient counselor and chaplain where he lives his faith through his job, dealing with emergencies, trauma, illnesses, death and healing daily. The result is a pastor that can council a mature and aging congregation through the many events

that life throws their way, while at the same time being able to deliver a weekly sermon that speaks to them wherever they are in their faith journey.

LTUMC celebrates the seasonal calendar through worship all year long. On some occasions, a covered dish meal in the Fellowship Hall is combined with a worship service in the sanctuary to kick off the season, Advent for example. Visitors and tourists to the area often plan their trips to coincide with our services during holiday seasons. Even if their visit is just a random visit, they can always find appropriate celebration of the season for whatever time of the year is at hand.

The Fellowship Hall is critical to worship and fellowship for the congregation of LTUMC. Our seating in the sanctuary is limited to just under 100 congregants. When a service begins to reach capacity, ushers try to redirect regular congregants into the Fellowship Hall for overflow seating. The Fellowship Hall has audio and video, but it needs to be upgraded for higher quality sound and hearing-impaired assistance. The size of the video screen needs to be increased and the sound system quality needs to be enhanced to the level where one feels like they are in the sanctuary. The Fellowship Hall must maintain the ability to quickly flip the room from worship to fellowship following the services.

Fellowship immediately following the worship service is a big part of worship at LTUMC. After the service congregants gather to greet old friends and welcome visitors while sharing a light snack and coffee prepared by a volunteer. Our fellowship time has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 precautions and protocols. It seems that fellowship has been turned on and off too many times and the church is finding it difficult to restart it. In any case, fellowship is critical to the congregation of LTUMC.

During the six warmest months of the year, the local activities and social clubs compete for the fellowship time of the congregants every day of the week except for Sunday worship and as a result, it is difficult to plan fellowship events for the church during the summer. However, LTUMC is missing a big opportunity for fellowship during the off season. With support of volunteers, LTUMC could have a covered dish dinner weekly throughout the off season. With the social clubs closed along with many of the restaurants, congregants would be eager to gather for a shared meal and good fellowship. In addition, this would provide opportunities to involve a broader community in church activities.

Prayer

Prayer is an important program of ministry at LTUMC but has little to do with the new or upgraded Fellowship Hall. Even so, this report is providing a brief overview of the prayer ministry so that it does not get overlooked.

LTUMC is a praying church and as such utilizes multiple prayer lines. One prayer line is a community prayer line, not affiliated with the church, and anyone on the prayer list can ask for prayers. With the help of our new staff Administrator, LTUMC has recently upgraded its website and can now manage the prayer list through the website and a corresponding app. The

Administrator manages these prayer requests and places them into bulletin for the worship service.

Prayer is also very well integrated into our worship service. The pastoral prayer is particularly effective as it not only includes those items on the prayer list, but the prayer provides the opportunity for anyone in the congregation to speak out names or events that need our prayers.

Giving

As previously indicated, LTUMC is a giving church. In 2021 revenues will total almost \$400,000 and our outreach giving will be \$172,000. Please see the Total Income w/ Giving & Outreach chart on page 3.

Outreach programs are generally targeted to the local community because the needs are so great. Recipients include food banks, women's shelters, children's centers and programs, homeless shelters, disaster relief, and a scholarship program for local students. LTUMC is particularly proud of its scholarship program where currently more than 20 students are the recipients of scholarships. Most of the students are graduates of the local high school and many of them will be the first college graduate of their families. The scholarship students are matched with sponsors that are congregants of the church who stay in communications with each student sending them cards, prayers and well wishes whenever needed but particularly at exam time. Students attend worship services periodically at which time they are recognized and welcomed by the congregation.

LTUMC uses the 3 Ts to describe its outreach program. First, the church depends on our congregation to draw upon their treasures to underwrite the outreach efforts. Secondly, LTUMC asks for volunteers from the congregation to step up and share their talents to help us manage outreach partner relationships and administer the outreach programs. Third, volunteers are asked to give their time for all aspects of the outreach programs.

LTUMC is blessed to have congregants willing to fund our programs. LTUMC must expend a lot of due diligence to find the talents that are required in key positions and committees, and it seems to be getting more difficult as the congregation ages out. Simply put, volunteers are getting to be more difficult to find.

The committee believes that good communications regarding our outreach programs can go a long way toward solving some of the volunteer problem. One idea is to use the weekly dinners to highlight key outreach partners and have representatives come join us for questions and dialogue. Through these types of informal presentation sessions, volunteers will hear the call to self-identify either their talents and/or their time to fill key roles for the outreach efforts.

The Fellowship Hall is a critical component of outreach communications. To accommodate periodic covered dish dinners with guests, the church needs to have plenty of places to plug in crock pots and hot plates for the covered dishes, a nice contemporary serving area for ease of

service, and enough comfortable tables and chairs for dining. Once again, two bathrooms would be a significant and necessary upgrade for servicing such events.

Study

All of programs of ministry (worship, pray, give, study and serve) work together to provide the dimensions and experiences that enable a congregant's faith journey to develop and grow. At LTUMC there is a gap in our study program. Other than the wonderful worship services, there are no other regularly scheduled programs for study. The reason may be because the pastor is only 25% time or that volunteers have not volunteered to pick up the study opportunities and carry them out. When Bible study programs are organized from time to time, the small groups of participants generally choose other venues to meet rather than the Fellowship Hall. The existing building is not the most conducive environment for study. The building requires a set-up and a tear down at the beginning and at the end of the session. The furniture consists of plastic tables and chairs which are not very comfortable. There is only one bathroom that is not very efficient for breaks. No matter how the tables and chairs are set-up, it is difficult to create any kind of intimate environment in such a large room for good small group discussions. Currently, the audio/visual set-up is lacking, and it would be difficult to ensure that good connectivity to course materials was always going to happen. In summary, the Fellowship Hall is critical to study at LTUMC but the venue itself must be one that is inviting, effective and comfortable for study, perhaps with a dedicated room for small groups that would not require set-up and tear-down. LTUMC should consider a conference room setting for 12 to 15 persons with furniture and technology that stays in place and is ready for use. This room should be designed with consideration for Bible study, pastoral conferencing and small meetings. (See section Serve for additional discussion of conference room.)

Serve

Serving at LTUMC has always been heavily dependent on volunteers because our staff is part time and small. The church has a 25%-time pastor, a 46-week Sunday only organist and an Administrator that is part time. LTUMC is proud of our highly experienced staff and the quality of work that they do for the church but, the church depends heavily on lay leaders to serve the various leadership roles.

Facilities at LTUMC must accommodate leadership, but today the Fellowship Hall is barely capable of that and, only after a lot of "work arounds". There is not an office for the pastor or for the Administrator and there is no place for pastoral counseling. Our current pastor says he does not need an office as he uses his home office and has accommodations at his full-time job. Our Administrator has a small desk against the wall in the Fellowship Hall which along with her home meets her needs for the present. The copier is also in the Fellowship Hall against the wall and adjacent to the desk. After church and during fellowship and coffee time, checks and cash are collected and counted at a table along another wall in the Fellowship Hall.

As the church plans with a ten-year plus outlook, the plan must include space for an office with a counting table and a desk for the Administrator and pastor. Our current pastor will not be at

LTUMC forever so the church must think through and plan proper accommodations for staff, for the present and the future. Today, there is no office space available and to add office space in the existing building would require the space that is currently used for storage of tables, chairs and other amenities.

Meetings at the church by leadership are frequent but the accommodations are lacking in the same ways that they are lacking for study. (See section Study for additional discussion of conference room). Solving the study location problems with an appropriate room for example, a conference room, would also provide required accommodations for staff as well. In conjunction with an office, a conference room for 12 to 15 persons would be ideal for Bible study and would be an excellent room for pastoral counseling and meetings.

Accessibility Plan

The sanctuary and Fellowship Hall at LTUMC both sit atop of a hill which includes a small parking lot. This parking lot has designated parking for handicap parking and some additional parking for other congregants. At the bottom of the hill and across a driveway is a large parking lot with sufficient spaces for almost all events at the church. This parking lot could be expanded if ever required. If the Fellowship Hall is expanded, the remaining parking spaces in the hilltop parking lot should probably be designated as handicap only on Sundays. Any such plan should also provide a driveway for the purpose of driving up and dropping off congregants that are not handicap but have difficulty managing the hillside walkway. This will allow such congregants to enter the back of the sanctuary while the driver can then proceed down the drop off driveway to the lower lot for parking. For other events, not on Sundays, the parking should be managed as the event requires.

The Study Committee Report deals only with considerations of the Fellowship Hall so issues regarding sanctuary access are out of scope but should not be impacted in any way. However, changes impacting parking will increase the foot traffic for drop offs and pick-ups and utilization of all the walkways on the property. As a result, sidewalks around the whole property should be evaluated for repairs or replacement. Some of the sidewalks around the sanctuary were made from granite boulders which are not very flat and as a result, the rocks present a tripping hazard. These boulder sidewalks could be replaced with flagstone or other flat rocks which would provide a walking surface that is less hazardous.

All plans should meet all regulations for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Since the project is not dealing with the sanctuary, then the sanctuary should not be affected by ADA regulations.

Summary

The Fellowship Hall at LTUMC needs repairs and refurbishment. The facility barely meets the needs of the church today with a lot of “work arounds”. The community is growing, and the full-time resident population is growing. The full-time resident growth is in the same

communities where current congregants reside. LTUMC is likely to see healthy growth over the 10-to-15-year horizon. The current facility will in no way meet the needs of a growing church for the longer term.

The minimum requirements for Fellowship Hall are a facility with 2 bathrooms, administrative office, conference room, and multi-use room. The multi-use room needs to be available for worshipers that overflow from the sanctuary at capacity and have an upgraded audio-video system with large screen tv to make worshipers feel as though they are in the sanctuary. The multi-use room needs to be available to accommodate the fellowship and coffee period immediately following worship services. And finally, the multi-use room needs to be able to accommodate covered dish dining with ample room for dishes, serving, and comfortable tables and chairs.

The Study Committee strongly recommends that LTUMC continue to pursue a new and or improved Fellowship Hall, following the Book of Discipline, and appointing a building committee. Any non-essential building repairs should be deferred until LTUMC understands the direction in which it will go with the Fellowship Hall.