



Strengthening charitable causes to change the world through generosity

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To: Hope Lutheran Church, The Villages, Florida
From: Mike Ward and Paul Marsh
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Subject: Feasibility Report

From April 3-11, 2022 Mike Ward and Paul Marsh conducted a feasibility study to test the viability of the construction project for the South Campus along with some investment to the facilities at the Central and Lake Weir Campus. A feasibility prospectus was created to articulate the story of the campaign. Pat O'Dell organized the study for the congregation and did a phenomenal job. Paul Marsh was on-site for interviews and cottage gatherings. Due to travel issues, Mike Ward participated virtually.

A total of 38 households were represented during the in-person interviews. Forty-one households returned the survey attached to the cottage gatherings. Another 39 households returned the general survey. Together, this means that 118 households were engaged in the study. Hope Church has approximately 1,100 households that make a financial contribution annually and therefore 10% of households were surveyed. GSB considers this a strong study in light of how many households were reached.

In addition to the above, GSB performed a donor performance study on 1,313 household records of giving for the congregation. According to this study, nearly \$50 million of gift capacity was identified. This assured the consultants that testing an \$8 million project is reasonable.

It should be noted that all interviewees and survey respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Therefore, in the body of this report you will find all answers, but never attached to anyone by name or other identifying information.

Findings:

Interview questions and survey responses were consistent for everyone participating. There were questions relating to:

- Awareness of and confidence in leadership,
- Opinions regarding the proposed plan, the priorities, and the needs of the plan, and
- Questions relating to fundraising capacity and other issues surrounding the ability to raise funds.

Those interviewed in person had the ability to provide further information beyond just the questions asked at the conclusion of their interview.



Confidence in Leadership and connection to the ministry:

Those interviewed included newer members and long-term members of Hope. All campuses were represented. Most are active in the congregation, though many feel they are less active than at previous times in their lives. The vast majority feel that the ministry at Hope is very vibrant and active. In fact, not a single person in the in-person interviews said that the ministry was not vibrant.

Additionally, there is strong feeling that the staff and leadership are very effective in leading the congregation day to day. The preaching, pastoral care, and education are frequently mentioned as high points for people in their interactions with staff. It is felt that there are good business leaders on the council.

There is hesitancy about the staff's ability to add a capital campaign to their portfolio. This is two-fold. First, it is felt that with three campuses that they are stretched already. It is also widely shared that Pastor Jon-Marc's giftedness is more in preaching and care than in administration.

Project Needs and Solutions:

There is widespread understanding of the project and the need for the project. Though most members haven't felt that they were involved in the development of the project, awareness is very high for the growth in the south. Growth at Lake Weir is also frequently mentioned though it is not being addressed in this project.

The Activity Center, as presented during the study, is seen as too small and not innovative enough to have an impact.

Well over 80% of respondents feel that the project is either "critical to the future" or "Important to the future" indicating a very strong belief in the need. Few, if any, additional projects were mentioned that should be addressed at this time. There is a rumor that the South Campus will become a separate entity following this campaign. This is something the consultants recommend against and encourage messaging that this is not the case.

The lack of a clear strategic vision with a path to accomplish it is mentioned frequently. The development of the south campus is not questioned, but a clearer overall vision is needed for the entire ministry, especially as the south is developed. Desired in this vision are clear understandings of how the three sites fit together, an overall evangelism strategy, and articulation of how program ministry will grow across sites as the third site is developed.

Fundraising Potential:

Interviewees and survey respondents were asked to share whether or not they would support the campaign financially and if so, at what level. A total of \$850,000 to \$1.2 million was offered in gift suggestions from 108 households. The largest gift offered was \$150,000 and was the



only six-figure gift offered. A silent phase of a campaign will be critical to develop more large gifts for this project.

Further potential exists in estate gifts from members. Sixteen percent of interviewees indicated that they had included Hope with a gift in their estate plan. However, 50% indicated they had not but are open to considering this type of gift.

Volunteerism for the campaign will be a challenge and perhaps the biggest challenge this campaign will face. Very few names were offered as potential campaign leaders and most respondents indicated an unwillingness to lead or work in a campaign. This will be a challenge in leading an appeal and is why selecting leaders for the campaign that can draw others into it will be critical. It is also why staffing for a campaign is a critical activity.

Recommendations:

- 1.** Launch a \$3.5 - \$5 million campaign immediately. Silent phase will take place now. Public campaign will happen in January-March, 2023.
- 2.** Launch the activity center (\$500,000) project at an expanded scale for at least 50 people in meetings. This space needs to be configured to accommodate office space after the Worship Center is built but before the office complex is completed.
- 3.** Make the first project of the campaign five years of funding for hiring an Executive Director whose first job will be to lead this campaign, then strategic planning, then marketing/evangelism. Funding should be on a declining basis as the Hope budget absorbs this cost at 20% per year for the five years. Likely cost for this is +/- \$300,000 to the campaign.
- 4.** Construct the Worship Center building (\$3 million) at the South Site but hold off on the Office Wing for now. Should the campaign receipts exceed the cost of the Worship Center facility at the South and the projects for Central and Lake Weir, it is recommended to pay down debt.
- 5.** Money raised above what is needed for this project will go to debt relief.
- 6.** Upon completion of the campaign in April, 2023, launch a strategic planning process for all three sites. Strategic Planning timetable is April, 2023 to October, 2023.
- 7.** Launch a planned giving program inside the campaign that will extend for three years following the campaign.
- 8.** Begin major gift fundraising for the new Office Building in a quiet phase for that project in January, 2024. This will be from people who complete their campaign gifts early, new members, and others who gave well below capacity for this project.
- 9.** Provide for coaching for the Executive Director and Pastor Jon-Marc with Nathan Swenson Reinhold of GSB to help assure these key leaders work well together and focus on the most critical activities within the campaign and following. Moving administration from Jon-Marc to the Executive Director will reduce stress in the system and provide for the care and leadership of the congregation where it is needed.
- 10.** Provide outcome storytelling (CAGA) training for the staff, council, and key lay leaders to become the base of annual stewardship, planned giving, and evangelism strategy.



Conclusion:

Paul Marsh and I wish to express our gratitude for the opportunity to work with you in in this effort. It has been a privilege to work with Pat O'Dell and the church staff on this project. Their professionalism and faithful service will serve the ministry well and made this study process a most positive experience. Pat's leadership to this study is perhaps the best we have experienced in any congregational setting. She should be thanked by leadership.

You have an opportunity here to leave a lasting legacy for continued vibrant ministry in The Villages and beyond. You should feel great satisfaction and confidence in these results.

You should also recognize that reaching the goal of this campaign will take effort and diligence among many. We believe you have the capacity for this campaign to be a true blessing to those who lead it and for all who benefit from the results of it.

We look forward to the possibility of working with you to proceed. Thank you again for this opportunity to partner with you.

Faithfully Submitted,

Mike Ward, CFRE