

“Our God is an Awesome God!” How true this statement is! Our Savior Lutheran Church has been received an overflow of blessing from our Lord. Worship attendance has increased significantly in the last ten years from approximately 400 to 730 attendees representing a 71% increase. On Palm Sunday weekend, 985 people were in worship, welcomed 18 confirmands, enjoyed the special music performed by nearly 150 Sunday School children and willingly parked more than 100 cars in Lloyd’s parking lot to assure adequate parking for our guests and elderly members. The church was bursting at the seams with people and excitement.

As huge as the growth at Our Savior has been, the reality is the great commission of Jesus to “Go and Make Disciples of all nations” has not been fulfilled and remains the primary mission of the church. The overflow of worshippers and children has created opportunities for Our Savior to re-evaluate capacity and usage of the current facility. Mission Leadership Council has formed a Vision Team to identify what ministry possibilities God wants to accomplish through this congregation. Based on the vision statement, “Transforming people into fully devoted followers of Christ,” what does the facility look like which will assist in the accomplishment of our God given mission? What will the church look like as a representation of our celebration of Christ?

The Vision Team began weekly meetings on March 13, 2006. The team took note that the original reason for founding Our Savior was to reach out to the growing community. The congregation was sponsored by Christ Lutheran, located on the far edge of town, and designed to be new and innovative in concept and design. The present day congregation has the responsibility of carrying this legacy forward. On March 26, the Vision Team met with Mr. Deon Bahr, an architect from Lincoln, Nebraska. Mr. Bahr was sponsored by Lutheran Church Extension Fund with the purpose of visiting the church and making recommendations based on membership statistics and strategic plans. Mr. Bahr was very familiar with Our Savior. In 1996, his architect company had been contracted by Our Savior to prepare a ten year Master Plan and construction of the Family Life Center was based on his design.

Mr. Bahr noted the following areas of concern:

1. Administrative Space is becoming a problem. Currently, two staff members are located in a room which had been designated as a storage closet. With the addition of an associate pastor, three staff members will be working from one office area. To create a support structure for additional membership growth, the possibility of adding a third pastor, support staff and a full time worship director exists.
2. Sunday School classrooms are lacking in space to accommodate the current class sizes. With the uptrend in worship attendance, the projection for an increase in class sizes is a reasonable probability. Eighty percent of the classrooms lack enough square footage to provide an educational environment to adequately meet the needs of the currently registered students.
3. The sanctuary is in need of improvement to effectively meet the worship needs of the existing worshippers. He noted that the chancel area is very small to allow all worshippers an adequate view. The size of the narthex in comparison to the size of the sanctuary was also noted as lacking in space. The lighting is in need of being updated as well as the overall appearance of the room.
4. Parking is a major issue. He noted that any future growth of the congregation will be dictated by the availability of adequate parking. Creative thinking will be required to address this issue. This may include maximizing the number of stalls by removing the green space; signing a long term lease with Lloyd’s Drug Store; or shuttling parishioners from a remote parking area.
5. Currently, Our Savior occupies approximately 4.2 acres of land. Based on the current size of the congregation, 16 acres of land is recommended.

Some suggestions Mr. Bahr made in regards to the current facility included:

1. Additions to the Family Life Center to accommodate larger groups.
2. Using the original round structure, Mr. Bahr suggested making the entire round structure into one large sanctuary.
3. Annexation of 26th Street to create additional parking or locating off campus parking lots.
4. Larger classrooms will need to be constructed for the increasing number of Sunday School children.
5. Exploring the possibility of working with Church Development Partners, Inc., an investment group which helps churches to acquire ground at a reasonable price.

Mr. Bahr indicated that the congregation has done a great job utilizing the current facility and is to be commended for actively beginning a planning process at this point in time. He recommended creating a Master Plan for the next 7 to 10 years for the future development and expansion of ministry. The addition of pastors and support staff will develop outstanding programs which will enhance the mission of the church, strengthen the congregation's current members and sustain consistent growth. Ministry trends will help to shape the facility design and requirements.

The Vision Team has opted to identify short term and long term solutions in the critical areas lacking space. These areas include worship, parking, administrative, classroom, pre-school and storage space. Solutions encompass maximizing the usage of the current facility; researching the feasibility of remodeling the existing structure; studying ways to manage growth; forecasting the future needs of the congregation; objectively examining the possibility of developing a new campus; and above all, seeking God's guidance. The group is currently in the discussion phase as they address the issues. Ideas to improve parking include small groups serving as parking ushers who encourage people to park in the Lloyd's parking lot; giving people who park at Lloyd's tokens of appreciation; installing additional parking and driveways; and, creating a valet service for remote parking locations. To address the need for administrative space, the possibility of remodeling the old and new office spaces would create 3 to 4 new offices. Portable buildings may be used for offices or classrooms. The need for Sunday School space may be developed by using portable buildings or using the old Goodwill Store in the strip mall located to the west of Our Savior. This location has approximately 5200 square feet and could be used for 5th through 8th grade Sunday school, a youth area or worship center and a conference area for Discover Our Savior Class. By moving these classes to this location, space for the lower grades of Sunday school would be available. Worship space in the Family Life Center may be increased to approximately 400 chairs if the storage room on the east side of the building is used for a stage. A portable storage unit could be used to house the tables and chairs currently located in the storage room. The addition of services and remodeling of the sanctuary are also being actively investigated.

The excitement in exploring possible remedies for various space issues has been a joyous activity for the team. Only through the grace of God has Our Savior arrived at this point in time. All of these solutions require financing, and the team has been exploring creative options in this area. Mr. Bahr indicated that Our Savior has the potential to raise \$1.8 million in a capital campaign. Based on this projection and the valuation of the property, Our Savior has the ability to borrow \$3.0 million. Furthermore, as discussion occurs about a wide range of options, in the event a new campus was constructed, the determination of the possibility in locating a buyer for the current facility has been considered.

The Vision Team highly values the input of the congregation. Please feel free to contact any of the team members to share suggestions and concerns. Team members include Julie Duncan, Verda Fischer, Gordon Adams, Randy Wilcox, Lou Roemhildt, Bill Canham, Brent Berner, Randy Acklie, Mike Wingate, Dave Uher, Paul Sandall, Russ Wilcox, Pastor Lee Weander and Trish Kolterman. The team asks for your continued prayers as they diligently seek God's will.

Ezra 3:10-13 ¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. ¹¹ With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD :

"He is good;

his love to Israel endures forever."

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. ¹² But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. ¹³ No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.