

Background, Considerations and Findings Utilized in Developing the Strategic Plan

I. A New Beginning

Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (“LPC”) and its members have an opportunity to redirect the path to our future in concert with cultural and societal changes that are affecting all of Christianity. Our individual and collective strengths, history, and place in the community all provide enormous advantages as we leap into uncharted territory. The vision and mission statements of our church offer a guide to a new strategic plan, which our committee has been charged to produce.

The plan must address LPC as an institution, but also its members – you and us – and how we practice and experience our faith. In this document we are trying to lay out how we have gotten to the framework of the strategy. In a second one, the actual Plan, we will be more specific in describing our goals and proposed action steps.

Our society has undergone major changes since the post-war “glory years” of the mainline churches. We are much more diverse, and we have many more modes of education and entertainment. In effect distractions abound. Americans claim to be affiliated with religious institutions in large numbers, but the records of the churches belie it. Clearly we are more religious than western Europeans, who are ever more secular, even in the historically Catholic countries. We have many, many members who are deeply committed to LPC and bestow their time and energy on the church. But our members and attenders do not seem to be committed to their faith and churches in the sheer numbers and ways they might have been several decades ago. (See the last page for a more detailed summary of the US statistics for churches.)

We can both embrace and enhance what our members bring, and also expand our services and outreach to less active members and non-members in our community, bringing the Gospel to more people and doing God’s work.

All of us in main-line Christian churches are (or should be) worried about our collective future. None of us need be worried about the meaning and value of Christ’s message to us all. That will never fade. But broadly our institutions are not thriving. Aggregate membership is dwindling, and that means our role in our communities and in the Christian world is not as robust as it should be. We are not reaching, or serving, as many of our fellow citizens as Christ calls us to do.

Thankfully, LPC has resisted these unhappy trends in many ways. Our membership is down, but not at the same rate as other congregations. Our membership is relatively prosperous, and our members’ generosity and connection to the congregation have kept our church budget from falling, even as the economy has struggled. Nevertheless, the Strategic Planning Committee is

looking to the future. Demographics tell us that in 10 to 15 years 20% or more of our current members will not be with us. Our analysis seeks to push us in the direction of some major changes to our organization, operations and service. We hope you will agree, remembering that Christ calls us to dream.

In the interest of stimulating discussion and action, we have addressed not just ideas but provided a series of Findings which resulted from our deliberations. We also offer some thoughts that undergird the ideas. The last thing the Strategic Planning Committee wants is to produce another report that sits on a shelf, ignored. We have solicited and received excellent analyses and suggestions from the Ministry Groups, staff members and others. The excitement we have felt as we brain-stormed and debated should be reflected in the Strategic Plan. If it is to have the impact we urgently hope for, we need to convey that excitement to both Session and the Congregation. Please review and absorb this first background piece and get ready to help us reflect its contents in the Plan that will emerge.

II. Initial Studies And Considerations

A. Background/Methodology

Session approved the establishment of a Strategic Planning Committee at its meeting on February 12, 2013, consisting of the following members: David Morrison, Chair; Phil Church, Doug Cochrane, Tonya Tatum, Jim Edmondson, Irene Foster, Roy Mitchell, Adrian Steel and Linda Toner. (David Morrison resigned as Chair in July to pursue a Master of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary, and those duties were assumed by Jim Edmondson.) The Committee's stated mission was to work to ensure that LPC's Congregational life was moved and shaped by the Mission and Vision Statements previously approved by Session by fleshing out their broad objectives and providing an overall strategy for accomplishing them. At an initial Combined Ministry Group Meeting on February 19, 2013 we discussed the four Apostleship (Outward Looking) aspects of the Vision Statement, *i.e.*, vulnerable older adults, youth, public policy and the Tysons initiative.

Strategic Planning Committee meetings commenced on February 26 and were held approximately every two weeks thereafter. Our methodology was to a) seek input from all the relevant stakeholders, b) proceed through the Vision Statement item by item to determine LPC's strengths, weaknesses and challenges in each area, c) analyze the resources available which would enable us to move forward and then d) develop a Strategic Plan to do so.

1. Sources of Information

We sought input from the following groups and sources to assist in determining appropriate strategic recommendations.

1. Ministry Group and Committee Chairs – Christian Education, Management, Membership, Mission, Parish Life & Care and Worship
2. Deacons
3. LPC program staff
4. Company of Elders
5. LRR/Chesterbrook Residences representatives
6. Adult Club/Second Saturday Set as older adult representatives
7. Youth representatives
8. Congregation opinion leaders
9. Fairfax County demographics and trends
10. Tysons development plans and projections

In the case of Tysons Corner (henceforth, just “Tysons”) we have gone beyond the research stage by convening an interfaith multi-congregational partnership to explore how the group might effectively bring a spiritual/religious presence to what will become one of Virginia’s largest cities **in our own neighborhood**.

2. Initial Issues Set Forth In Our Vision Statement Approved By Session on April 9, 2013

As previously noted, our initial assignment was to work within the Vision Statement approved by Session on April 9, 2013. The Vision Statement contains the following seven key components.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Worship – |) | Discipleship (Inward Looking) |
| 2. Education – |) | Same |
| 3. Care- |) | Same |
| 4. Vulnerable Older Adults –) | | Apostleship (Outward Looking) |
| 5. Youth – |) | Same |
| 6. Public Policy – |) | Same |
| 7. Tysons – |) | Same |

Claimed... Called...Sent...by Jesus Christ, who alone is head of the Church.

3. Additional Issues Considered Important By the Committee

However, the Strategic Planning Committee believed that the following additional issues also had to be considered.

1. Resources
2. Fund-raising needs
3. Membership maintenance and growth

4. Staffing needs
5. Physical plant and infrastructure needs
6. Lay leadership
7. LPC heritage

C. LPC Strengths and Challenges

LPC is blessed with many strengths. We are a vibrant community of faith with a dedicated Congregation, gifted pastoral and lay leaders, excellent Christian Education, Mission and other programs, a history of care for our members, significant outreach into the community and a rich heritage. However, LPC faces a sobering demographic reality. Over 34% of our members are over 70 years old and 92 members are over 80. Similarly, membership has declined somewhat and pledge income has been relatively static for the past five years.

The Committee also heard a significant number of other concerns, *e.g.*, a) lack of an increase in the number of lay volunteers, perhaps related to the changing nature of volunteerism within our society, b) a stagnant number of a “middle group” of young families and adults which have historically provided vitality and emerging leadership in the Congregation, c) a perception of intimidation in classes and discussion groups -- many of our youth and young adult discussants can sometimes be overwhelmed with the expertise of our teachers (perhaps this is a nice problem to have),, d) little growth in Youth program participation, e) waning participation in the music program, and f) questions from some members about the direction and efficacy of a Tysons initiative.

We have observed anecdotally and in the aggregate that many young families want their children to be exposed to Christian teachings and values. That brings many to a church such as LPC. But many such parents drop their kids at church on Sunday and leave for other activities, not having found a reason personally for them to connect. We need to give them and others like them many avenues to connect.

Clearly, LPC must take aggressive action at least to maintain our membership levels during the next decade as we face the mortality statistics noted above. A healthy membership roll, and the concomitant financial, staff and budget implications, will be major driving forces in our realizing the mission and vision statements.

D. Broad Themes Considered Important by the Committee

The following broad themes emerged from our discussions. Many cross the traditional boundary lines of church activities, as represented by the Ministry Groups, as currently structured.

1. Addressing the needs of young adults and their families is the key to assuring continuing vibrancy, strength and viability of LPC during the next decade.

2. Multiple portals of communication and interaction need to be established to seek to interest and involve potential new members and to broaden our appeal and accessibility to our current members and the community.
3. Many of our community outreach programs can best achieve their goals via interfaith cooperation and coordination with other local houses of worship.
4. Our communications programs need to be overhauled and updated to take advantage of new media and our members' expectations.
5. Our physical plant and facilities are tired and need to be improved.
6. The economics of LPC need to be comprehensively reviewed.
7. Ministry groups and staff may need to be reorganized to better match our Strategic Plan for moving forward.
8. The realities of our membership demographics and membership maintenance must be addressed.
9. The Strategic Plan should provide specific objectives, measurable goals, accountability, action steps, and metrics for measurement of success and timelines for accomplishing all of the above.

III. Findings

(Note that these “findings” are not an actual plan themselves, but they expand on the references we have made in the earlier sections. In some cases they strongly suggest appropriate action steps in the Plan.)

A. Finding No. 1 – LPC’s Membership Is Aging and Lewinsville Must Expand and Emphasize Its Young Adult, Youth and Family Programs to Maintain Its Continuing Strength and Vitality During the Next Decade

The basic theme for the Committee’s Recommended Strategic Plan is that LPC can best accomplish all aspects of its Vision Statement, while simultaneously strengthening its membership retention and long-term financial viability, by centering our vision activities on serving and appealing to Young Adults, Youth and their families. The target audience was identified in a Webinar entitled “Connecting With Young Adults & Equipping A Multigenerational Church”, presented by the Young Adult Catalyst office of the Presbyterian Mission Agency on September 17, 2013 in which Generation X was defined as those born 1965 – 1980 (those now aged 33 – 48); Millennials as those born 1981 – 1995 (now aged 18 – 32); and Digital Natives as those born 1996 to date (now aged 17 and under).

We acknowledge the fact that Young Adults are primarily interested in a) the education, training and well-being of their children, and b) finding meaningful avenues of service. This emphasis will also include children and youth of all ages. Service “portals” should be multi-generational where possible. In recognition of their continuing interest in community outreach and public

policy issues, an emphasis on service to the community should expand. This finding needs attention in the intermediate term – two to five years.

Key considerations by the Committee were as follows.

- LPC's membership is aging. To thrive long into the future we need to attract and effectively serve young people.
- This includes young families, unmarried young adults, and teenagers.
- Young Adults (with and without children) and Youth need to be included in all aspects of church activities – worship services, leadership roles in committees, teaching, adult-education modules, etc.
- Special services need to be added to meet their needs and to attract their interest in LPC and the faith community at large. Some possibilities discussed included:
 - Day-care for preschoolers, with prices based on need.
 - After-school activities.
 - Expanded community volunteer activities.
 - Teen and young-adult programs in the community at large and among local congregations.
- Aggressively invite others in the community to participate in the traditional summer mission project.
- We need a stronger communications program to reach out to these cohorts in our Congregation, other congregations and the community.

Two key concepts and recurring words surfaced in our discussions: 1) LPC needs to create **portals** through which current and prospective members may enter our faith community, and 2) we need to assure that each activity that **touches** them helps to meet their needs. Many of these activities should be inter-generational.

B. Finding No. 2 – Lewinsville Should Centralize Its Mission Program to Highlight Our Successes with Older Adult Services and to Provide Additional Services to Children in Fairfax County

Key considerations discussed by the Committee included the following.

- Build on our two great successes – LRR and CRI.
- Get involved with the soon-to-be built Lewinsville Senior Center.
- Consider finding and nurturing local volunteer activities analogous to the annual summer mission project.

- Select a small number of programs to receive meaningful (and larger) financial contributions – each with a major impact.
- Adopt an elementary school and its neediest children.
- They should include inter-generational activities.
- Initiate programs to help the “sandwich generation.”
- Be prepared to respond when opportunities arise, as happened with CRI.

These suggestions strengthen or create new portals and will increase the touches for LPC prospects and current members. Portal promulgation should be a theme for growth.

C. Finding No. 3 – Public Policy Discussion from a Faith Perspective Is One of LPC’s Great Strengths and We Should Introduce Our Faith and Public Policy Programs to the Broader Community

Key elements in the Committee’s deliberations in this area centered on the twin considerations that 1) this is important to the community and the world, and 2) LPC has a unique capacity to play the role of a community leader in this area.

- This is another of our Congregation’s great strengths, and we should build on it and use the extraordinary gifts of many of our members.
- The topics and their civil presentation appeal to a prospective audience that stretches far beyond our members. This is potentially a prime portal.
- We need a stronger communication program to reach out to other congregations and the community about social issues we can collectively address.
- Encourage our current champions to take the lead.
- Add to the number of program leaders.
- Do not resist the possible need to move the venue to a community (non-church) facility, if it will stimulate broader participation.
- Use it effectively in introducing LPC to residents and workers in Tysons.

D. Finding No. 4 – Lewinsville Is in Position to Lead the Introduction of a Religious Presence in Tysons

The Committee believes this will allow LPC to expand our ministry and establish a local platform for inter-faith and inter-denominational cooperation in the following ways.

- Advance the current effort to create an inter-faith initiative to introduce religious/spiritual/church-like services to the residents of and employees in Tysons.
- Encourage the acceptance of this inter-faith organization into the business and other community organizations in Tysons, such as the Tysons Partnership.
- Analyze what services would appeal to and meet the needs of residents of Tysons. It is likely that prospective participants will range from young professionals, empty nesters and service workers who will occupy the multifamily properties that already exist and which will be added by the thousands. Be flexible.

- Find volunteer opportunities unique to Tysons that will interest prospective participants and church members.
- Expand to activities that extend beyond those customary for faith communities, *e.g.*, a coffee shop or other gathering spot; art galleries and shows; community theater; other cultural activities; ESL programs, etc.

E. Finding No. 5 - LPC Needs to Adapt Its Worship Services to a Changing Congregation and Member Needs (while Remaining “Authentic”)

Possibilities discussed by the Committee in this area included the following.

- Add services in different formats and times that appeal to younger prospects and current members, and communicate about them.
- Use technology in the services, such as video, audio and photographs.
- Consider altering the seating in the sanctuary.
- Consider offering communion more frequently.
- Involve younger members more frequently and widely in worship services.

F. Finding No. 6 – Our Aging Buildings Need Major Renovations and Upgrading and We Need to Rethink in Comprehensive Ways the Economics of Church Operations

A brief summary of some of our key membership and financial information from 2009 to date is set forth below. Sources are Mary Ann Phillip, Clerk, and Gary Fitzgerald, Church Administrator.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Membership	706	693	660	675	
Pledging Units	247	245	242	231	229
Pledge Income	997,799	988,431	1,041,722	1,020,523	1,103,350
Avg. Pledge	4,165	4,131	4,360	4,533	4,639
Budgeted Income	1,107,446	1,158,670	1,152,159	1,169,600	1,200,000
Budgeted Expense	1,152,425	1,178,669	1,152,156	1,169,828	1,218,133
Total Income	1,160,000	1,105,893	1,158,392	1,136,339	
Total Expense	1,177,019	1,144,902	1,158,912	1,167,009	

Our current physical plant consists of the Sanctuary, Heritage Hall and the Old Manse. In addition, we have a cemetery, three small parking lots and a 40% interest in the Peters Property. Essentially, the Sanctuary is utilized on Sundays only, plus a few times during the week for weddings, funerals and memorial services, music practice, etc. Heritage Hall houses our administrative offices, serves as our Christian Education base on Sundays, provides space for a moderate number of church and community related meetings during week days and is heavily

utilized from approximately 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM throughout the week for church meetings and various outside civic and charity groups. The Old Manse is currently under short-term lease throughout the week to a Pastoral Counseling Center at a very modest compensation to the church. The Peters Property is used occasionally for outdoor events.

The Sanctuary interior (plus the narthex, St. Andrews Hall and administrative offices) was remodeled in 1990, but the exterior is in dire need of painting and repairs estimated to cost approximately \$30,000. Heritage Hall is 50+ years old and badly in need of refurbishing to improve its overall functionality and general appearance. Bathrooms, air-conditioning and energy efficiency are most in need of improvement. No cost estimates are available, but it would probably be in the low six figure range to make all necessary basic repairs and upgrades. We will know more precisely when the work of the Building Committee is complete in 2014. A preliminary Facilities Audit of the mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) systems concluded last month indicated that they generally appear to be in good working order. The heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems (11 units) have an expected remaining useful life of 3 to 7 years (with one exception that would likely cost \$30,000 to repair). The maintenance budget has been inadequate for a number of years and will need to be increased to cover the costs of those needs. The Old Manse is extremely old and inefficient and probably facing demolition in the near to midterm.

Considerations discussed by the Committee included the following.

- Combine some LPC programs/ministries with those of other local churches to strengthen our programs jointly and to reduce expenditures for each. For example, can we join our excellent music ministry with one or more other Presbyterian or other congregations? This would require changes to the worship programs as well.
- Philanthropy has become more directed. Many people do not wish simply to give money to an institution; they want to know to what purpose it will be used.
- Adapt and increase our fund-raising efforts to give pledgers an opportunity to direct their gifts to programs or special uses of their choice. This does not necessarily align with Presbyterian polity despite the societal reality.
- Encourage the Lewinsville Foundation to focus even more on fund-raising in addition to managing limited financial accounts.
- Our aging buildings need major renovation and upgrading. We anxiously await the outcome of the work of the Building Committee and the Management Ministry Group in its evaluation. Altering and adding facilities will probably require both capital fund-raising and borrowing. The latter will have a major impact on the LPC annual budget, presenting urgency to finding operational expense savings, as well as increases in stewardship.
- LPC's other assets need to be re-evaluated – the Old Manse and the Peters property. How should they be used for programs or as financial resources? Again, the work of the Building Committee will be important to decisions in this area.

G. Finding No. 7 – There Is Much Overlap and Lack of a Centralized Theme Among Lewinsville’s Current Ministry Groups, and They Need to Be Reorganized to Align with the Vision and Mission of LPC

In the 2013 Session Handbook the functions of the various Ministry Groups are identified as follows.

1. Christian Education
 - a. Children’s Ministry
 - b. Youth Ministry
 - c. Adult Education
 - d. Library
 - e. Leadership by a full-time Director of Christian Education and full-time Director of Youth and Young Adult programming
2. Management (both broad responsibility and thru sub-committees)
 - a. Oversees the Annual Stewardship Campaign
 - b. Reviews/recommends to Session fund-raising activities
 - c. Prepares annual church budget
 - d. Manages the use, maintenance and upgrading of church property and equipment
 - e. Establishes and assures compliance with HR policies and procedures
 - f. Provides for any necessary legal counsel
 - g. Administration Committee
 - i. Organization, management, policy and procedural activities especially as they relate to the Church Administrator
 - ii. Buildings and Grounds subcommittee
 - iii. Archives and Cemetery subcommittee
 - iv. Building use
 - v. Information technology use and communications
 - h. Finance Committee
 - i. Recommends financial policies, monitors financial health of the church and long term financial planning
 - ii. Develops annual church budget
 - iii. Conducts Annual Financial Review and appropriate audits
 - iv. Controls funds allocated to specific program areas
 - i. Personnel Committee
 - i. Develops and enforces personnel policies for Pastors and staff
 - ii. Develops job descriptions, contracts for independent contractors, assists in selection and hiring of staff
 - iii. Recommends salary adjustments, significant shifts in staff duties and disciplinary or termination actions

- iv. Conducts annual performance reviews
 - v. Oversees Committee on the Pastorate (COMPAS)
 - vi. Reviews annually the terms of call for Pastors
 - vii. Establishes office procedures;
 - viii. Selects employee benefit programs
 - j. Stewardship Committee
 - i. Develops the responsible use of the congregation's human qualities and resources
 - ii. Plans and conducts an annual pledge campaign
 - iii. Coordinates with LPC Foundation with respect to directed gifts
3. Membership ...oversees
- a. Visitor outreach
 - b. Inquirer's class
 - c. New member integration
 - d. Greeters program
 - e. Media venues
 - f. LPC in the Community events
 - g. Note: Surprisingly, there is no mention whatsoever in this description of seeking to obtain new members, but only of supporting "those who choose to join...to becoming active, connected members of the congregation."
4. Mission and Service
- a. Coordinates LPC's mission outreach
 - b. Oversees LPC's relationship with Lewinsville Retirement Residence
 - c. Oversees LPC's relationship with Chesterbrook Residences, Inc.
 - d. Allocates Pentecost and Peacemaking offerings
5. Parish Life and Care
- a. Dedicated to involving members in the life of the church via care, companionship, etc. within our congregation
 - b. Shares info via info bulletin board, photo boards, etc.; publishes photo directory every five years; delivers worship flowers to shut ins, etc.
 - c. Conducts card ministry
 - d. Maintains cradle roll.
 - e. Enters attendance records from pew pads, Calls non-attendees and prepares annual membership role
 - f. Serves coffee and snacks between services
 - g. Oversees hospitality committee
 - h. Manages clusters
 - i. Oversees nursery operations
 - j. Oversees volunteer coordinators
 - k. Arranges Christ Care and small group training and support

- l. Serves as LRR liaison
 - m. Coordinates blood drive
 - n. Arranges for faith community nurse
 - o. Conducts prayer shawl ministry
 - p. Oversees the Presbyterian Women organization
 - q. Administers Jeffrey Knoerr education funds
6. Worship
- a. Plans and facilitates worship services
 - b. Involves congregants in worship leadership
 - c. Prepares and supports communions and baptisms
 - d. Prepares sanctuary for services places flowers, banners, etc.
 - e. Works closely with Director of Music Ministries in music, choral, hand bells, children's and adult choirs, etc.
 - f. Schedules liturgists and lay readers
 - g. Schedules ushers

The Strategic Planning Committee anticipates finalizing a comprehensive Strategic Plan to address these Findings within approximately the next thirty to sixty days.

Respectfully submitted,

Strategic Planning Committee
Jim Edmondson, Chair
October 15, 2013