

A Call to Action
Study Committee Report to the
Congregation
11/12/2006

Introduction – Johnny Quiroz

Community Profile – Troy Chapman

Church Profile – Ray Cunningham

Youth – Corina Sanchez

Children – Linda Hutchings

Program - Jeannette Burns

Facility Priorities - Connie Smith

Statistical Data of Current Facilities and Projected Facilities –
Monte Smith

Introduction

At a Board of Trustees meeting in the summer of 2005 we were discussing some maintenance and repair needs as well as the population boom in the Crowley area, and what we as a church were doing to address all of the needs and opportunities God was laying before us.

The trustees became excited about the possibilities and decided that the church needed to develop a new master site plan so that we could take each necessary step with a larger vision in mind.

The trustees brought their ideas to the 2005 Lord's Acre steering committee and to the Administrative Council. It was decided that 90% of the 2005 Lord's Acre net proceeds would go toward the development of a master site plan, with any remainder being applied to implementing the first phase of the plan.

The trustees selected an architect, Rick Larsen of Larsen & Dye Associates, based on his experience working with churches whose needs were similar to ours.

He met with the trustees and drew up some preliminary concept designs. We had those and a rendering of a possible new connecting building ready in time for Lord's Acre 2005.

A Study Committee was appointed, as required by the United Methodist Book of Discipline, before any major renovation or building project can begin.

The committee began meeting in December 2005, and we have met at least once monthly since then to compile and analyze information.

Ray Cunningham compiled information from previous trustee facility assessments; Linda Hutchings and Corina Sanchez combined the visions of various committees

since 1990 and identified which ideas had been implemented and which were ongoing concerns.

Connie Smith and Jeanette Burns put together information from three different surveys and at least nine different brainstorming sessions to get ideas from the whole congregation.

Monte Smith took statistical data to do a current picture and future projections for the church. Troy Chapman gathered historical and demographic community information.

We gleaned other information from community sources.

We spent a Saturday touring other church facilities and visiting with their leaders.

Pat Sprayberry-Hall, the executive director of the Central Texas Methodist Foundation, met with us to give us information about capital funding, indebtedness, and realistic financial projections.

Dr. Allen Goss, the Central Texas Conference Director of Church Growth and Development, met with us and discussed planning and growth potential for our church.

We have reported regularly to the Administrative Council. At the September meeting and at Charge Conference, the basic programming priorities we had identified and the facility and staffing projections we recommended were adopted.

90% of the 2006 Lord's Acre net proceeds were earmarked for the Building Fund with priority on renovation, repair and updating current buildings.

On October 17 the Study Committee and trustees together met with the architect. He is currently working on a first draft based on what we as a church have identified as immediate and longer term facility priorities.

This morning we want to share with you what we have learned and what we, the Study Committee and the Administrative Council, are recommending.

Nothing is set in stone at this time, and your input is welcome. There are 3"x5" cards available for ideas or concepts you think we may have overlooked. You may place suggestion cards in the baskets by each door as you leave the sanctuary this morning, or turn them in to the church office. Please print, and please include your name on the card in case we need clarification about your ideas.

Let's begin with who we are and where we're going as a community. Troy Chapman will give us an overview of the Crowley area, and Ray Cunningham will focus on our church profile.

Community Profile

The city of Crowley evolved from a quiet pioneer farming settlement in the mid-1800's to a growing agricultural community linked to the world by the railroad, to an incorporated town in 1951, to a "city" in 1972.

The 1970 census showed a population of 2,583 and Crowley was the sixth fastest growing town in Texas.

By 1990, the population had more than doubled to 6,974. During the past 16 years the population in Crowley and the surrounding area has boomed. Growth and mobility have blurred community boundaries.

The 5-mile radius around FUMC includes not only the city of Crowley but also unincorporated areas, and large parts of Burleson, Joshua, Fort Worth and Edgecliff. Our current congregation members reside in primarily in 6 different zip codes. The new 76123 zip code area is also within our radius.

It is reasonable to assume that we should be reaching out to everyone within that 5-mile radius and within these zip codes. We should know who they are so that our invitation and outreach to them will be appropriate and effective.

The current population in this area is just over 183,000. Within 5_years the population is projected to climb by 26,000 individuals to about 209,000 souls.

God is reaching out to each household, each person represented by these statistics. What do we need to know about them to help them feel welcome in our community and in our congregation?

We need to know that:

Among individual groups, Anglos represent about 71% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up 30%, which is slightly below the national average of 33%. The largest of these groups, Hispanic/Latinos, accounts for 14% of the total population. Projections of future growth maintain about the same percentages.

We need to know that:

Our area can be described as somewhat traditional due to the above average presence of married persons and two-parent families.

We need to know that:

Overall, the likely faith involvement and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is somewhat high when compared to national averages, and that about 10% of the population identify "Methodist" as their denominational preference.

We need to know that:

The largest generational group in terms of numbers is Millenials (persons from ages 5 to 24) comprised of nearly 55,000 persons or about 30% of the total population in the area.

We need to know that:

The values and lifestyles in the area are predominantly classic Middle American. The top individual segment is a lifestyle group called "Young Suburban Families" representing 15.0% of all households.

We need to know that:

Some major concerns of households across our area may tend to include: Divorce, Finding a Good Church, Achieving a Fulfilling Marriage, Parenting Skills, Finding Spiritual Teaching, and Aging Parent Care.

We need to know that:

This is our frontline mission field. The people of this community and area are the gift with which God has blessed us, the responsibility with which God has charged us, and the harvest that is ripe before us.

Church Profile

The Crowley Methodist Church began in the late 1880's in a small settlement by Deer Creek. The settlement was named "Crowley" after the foreman building the railroad, through the area.

The church was part of a circuit, and didn't become a fulltime charge until 1946.

In 1959 the Crowley Methodist Church relocated from its property next to the cemetery to our current 6 acre site. The first building included the sanctuary and old education wing.

In 1960 we held our first Lord's Acre to make the payment on the bonds sold to build the building. Through the Lord's Acre program we paid off the bonds in 7 years.

In 1968 the Fellowship Hall was built. It also was paid for in 7 years with Lord's Acre proceeds.

In 1972 a new parsonage was built on the corner of our acreage.

In 1976 a new education and office wing was built, and was paid for with Lord's Acre funds in 12 years.

In 1988 the Sanctuary was remodeled. It too was paid for in 12 years with Lord's Acre funds.

We have no indebtedness.

Our church has always paid its full share for mission and ministry beyond our local church, and we gladly go the extra mile to help others.

Crowley United Methodist Preschool was started in 1989 because there was no preschool available in Crowley, and the community needed one. Now there are 80 students and 10 workers on staff.

This church started the House of Hope in 1994 because the community and its churches needed a central location for giving people emergency food and clothing assistance. Twelve years later, the House of Hope is a major community help agency, and is adding a third building at its current site to accommodate its work.

In response to specific disaster and poverty needs, this church's youth and adults began participating in work mission trips in 1994, going on the first Central Texas Conference Youth in Mission trip to help with flood recovery in Missouri.

In 1996, the church also began traveling to the Texas/Mexico border to serve alongside other Christians working there.

Every building built and each program initiated at First United Methodist Church of Crowley was in response to God and to a need in our community.

We believe that the main need in every person's life is for a positive relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Meeting people's other needs --

for fun, for learning, for spiritual expression, for creative outlets, for human touch, for healing, for comfort, for friends and others who care, for work to do, for purpose, for food, for clothing and for shelter - trying to meet those needs is the way we show and share God's love for the world.

It is also one of the ways we meet people and grow in relationship to them so that we can invite them to claim their place in the family of God.

What is our current situation?

During the last 20 years, while our area's population has been growing, our church's membership numbers have remained fairly static.

Average worship attendance had built from 100 in 1985 to over 200 by 2000, but had fallen back to 131 in 2004 and 2005. Average attendance has begun to climb again in 2006.

There is money in our building fund, and the net proceeds from the last two Lord's Acres have been earmarked for building.

We **do** need to be doing better, however, in our giving to fund the regular mission and operation of our church.

The Study Committee has taken all of this into account in looking at what we need to do to truly be the Church in this time and place.

The Study Committee finds that our current site in the heart of Crowley remains a good location, with an even stronger future ahead.

With wise planning, our 6 acres can accommodate the building and parking the church will need for many years to come.

Our current buildings are solid and already have sufficient square footage to accommodate at least a doubling of our current ministry and attendance.

But it has been 16 years since our last major remodeling project and almost thirty years since our "new" Education Wing was built.

Our buildings say "home" to those of us who have been around for a while. To new residents, younger generations and visitors our buildings are saying "yesterday," "thirty years ago," and "the best time was in the past."

We want our buildings to reflect the life, the warmth, the welcome and the future hope of our congregation.

We want anyone walking or driving by here to **know** that we are First United Methodist Church of Crowley, and we want to present the up-to-date face of a congregation with a bold commitment to service in the name and spirit of our Lord and Savior.

Our church family is blessed with strong lay leadership, with many excellent teachers, with a spirit of generosity, with a willingness to work hard for the church, with an attitude of volunteerism, with an abundance of expertise and talent covering all areas of life, and with a desire to use these gifts in God's service and for the sake of present and future generations

We have many solid ministries for older adults, and we continue to seek out new opportunities and to invite new folks into our existing ministries.

Our music ministries are varied, strong, and growing.

Our mission ministry is outstanding on the local level as well as within the region, nation and world.

There are 6 long-standing Adult Sunday School classes with full programs of teaching, learning, outreach, service and special activities. A new Young Adult Class was launched last Sunday as part of our commitment to serve the present and move into the future.

Momentum and support for all of these ministries continues. We will keep building on these strengths.

For more information, refer to the brochure packet you will receive at the end of our report.

Children

Last Sunday there were eight little ones in the nursery.

In our area children from birth through 4 years of age already make up over 7% of the population. Some demographers are calling them "Generation Z."

Birth rates at area hospitals are booming, and in 5 years, those children and their little brothers and sisters will constitute over 14% of the people in and around Crowley.

Our volunteer nursery workers, Betty Garner and Leona Rapp, and Jan Chapman, Sunday School teacher for the Toddlers and Twos, are capable, dedicated, loving caretakers who are now nurturing their third generation of Crowley's children.

But we are approaching the maximum number of children who can be well cared for by 2 to 3 volunteers. That is a good "problem" to have! Additional workers, paid workers, and additional rooms will be required as more "Generation Z'ers" come to bless us.

We need to move immediately to address the spiritual and other needs of the newest **completed** generation, the Millennials, whose current ages range from 5 to 24. They make up 30% of our area's population, but we don't see that reflected in our church's population.

Our church has a high-quality children's ministry under the capable leadership of our volunteer Children's Coordinator, Connie Smith.

This summer, our Evangelism Chair, Marlene Richardson, launched Fun Fridays @ First as an outreach to all the children within our area.

At “Fun Fridays”, Vacation Bible School, and other special events we may have attendance of 80 or more children at a time. Some of those children have church homes; many do not.

2

If you believe, as we do, that every child - every person - every family - should have a church to call home, then we must expend the energy and resources necessary to offer the same quality of welcome on Sundays as we do at special events.

We are committed to children's whole selves, including their spiritual lives and their physical and psychological safety. Within the past months we have put a Safe Sanctuary policy into effect and have trained and screened at least eighty of our adults and youth so they will be allowed responsibility with children.

While 6 to 12 children from the ages of 4 to 11 have a wonderful faith learning experience together in our One Room Sunday School each week, four other children's classrooms sit empty.

Each year, dozens of young families come into contact with us as a church through our fine Crowley United Methodist Preschool, and through our large and active Cub Scout Pack 554. These ministries give us multiple opportunities for developing meaningful relationships with these children and their families.

There are some actions we must take to be a church that is attractive to those families and individuals and that lets them know they have a home here with us.

For the children, those actions will include:

- Capitalizing on the excellent children's ministry already in place by reestablishing a working Children's Council, increasing the number of volunteers with children for all activities, adding to the number of children's Sunday School classes, providing every resource needed, and working to provide some staff support

for children's ministry, as well as continuing and expanding current programs and activities.

- Adding classes and teachers to our Preschool to accommodate more students, and adding staff and program to be able to offer "extended care" for children whose parents need a safe, positive environment for their preschoolers beyond the 9 am to 2 pm school day.
- Offering a children's sports program based on game fundamentals and Christian principles. We are specifically recommending the "Upward" soccer program.
- Establishing a relationship with Bess Race Elementary School to offer some volunteer tutoring/mentoring and to maintain positive connections with the school and its students and families.
- Offering additional special events for children, and for children and families, and for parents while offering childcare.
- Developing an ongoing program of support for parents.
- Thinking of children and their needs in all of our program and facility planning.

Youth

Our youth, those in grades six through twelve, are another one of the priorities identified by the Study Committee. They are also part of the Millennial Generation.

Youth Ministry has been an identified concern for our church for the past few years. We have been in a rebuilding phase, and have seen some wonderful things happening with the youth here.

The Staff Parish Relations Committee has adopted a plan for hiring a Youth Director for a year or so at a time from Brite Divinity School at TCU, and being a teaching church for that student as he or she goes through seminary and does his or her Supervised Ministry Year.

The youth had a good year of building relationships and doing outreach to friends at school, as well as growing through mission trips, study, discussion and fun, with Owen Chandler as the Youth Director for 2005-2006.

We anticipate continued learning and growth under the leadership of our new Youth Director, Jon Reeves.

Youth are also involved in the Spirit Moves ministry and in Troop 554 Boy Scouts of America sponsored by our church, and we want to continue and expand church support of both of those ministries.

Beyond programs and plans already in motion, Youth Ministry priorities identified by the Study Committee include:

- Specific focus on Crowley High School as a mission field
- Mentoring/tutoring relationships with students
- Support for parents of junior high and high school students
- Volunteer Sunday School teachers for the youth
- More volunteers to work with youth on a regular schedule
- Expanded duties and increased hours and pay for the Youth Director

Having raised two daughters in this church I have witnessed firsthand the

importance of mission outreach. I have seen in my children an understanding of compassion for others as they have learned valuable life lessons they continue to pass on.

Program

The third and fourth areas of priority for program emphasis are young adult ministry and evangelism. The immediate need for attention to young adult ministry has been mentioned as a part of Linda's report on children, Ray's report on the church and Troy's report on demographics. Troy told you that 15% of our area's population can be described as a lifestyle group called young suburban families. This group ranks high in the number of persons living in family households, number of households with three or more workers, and the number of working women with children. More than half of these individuals are high school graduates or above and workers are split in near-average proportions of white and blue collar occupations. Popular activities range from home improvement to bowling. Primary concerns are parenting skills, divorce, fulfilling marriage, retirement opportunities, good schools and time for recreation and leisure. Faith involvement levels match the national average. These households contribute significantly more to charities than the national average, less to educational institutions and about the same to religious organizations. Asked to identify programs and characteristics they would prefer in a church these households are more likely to indicate marriage enrichment opportunities, parent training programs, family activities and sports and camping. We have already been moving to be more in tune with the needs of this lifestyle group and of young adults and young families generally, but we have much work to do. The study committee is recommending an intense young adult ministry initiative including the new Sunday School class started for the young adults last week, encouraging mission involvement by gearing information and scheduling to young adults, offering a variety of one-time and ongoing activities and classes for young adults, couples and families, moms and dad while providing childcare. Parents of our pre-schoolers and scouts, as well as members and others, will be included in our thinking and planning. Many of us know the blessing of always having been a part of a local church and knowing God through Jesus Christ from early on, many of us know the blessing of coming to Christ later, but wishing we had been ready for that relationship sooner while we were growing up or while our children were growing up. It is never too late and it is never too early in our lives to know that love or to make that decision to follow Christ. The fact that you are

here this morning means that somebody, somewhere, sometime invited you to church, brought you to church or offered your Christ. Our job as the church is to invite, bring and offer-- that's Evangelism. We don't force, coerce or manipulate. Each one has to agree on his or her own to come, to listen, to check it out. Then, each one has his or her own decision to make about answering "yes" or "no" or maybe "later" to God, but our job is the invitation, the welcome, the hospitality, the teaching, the opportunities, sounding the evangel making known the good news of Jesus Christ. Everything we are about as the church is making disciples. In fact, that is the mission statement of the United Methodist Church: Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world because even one disciple makes all the difference in the world. Our local church's mission statement is Reach, Teach, Love, Serve. There is a heart and a cross in the middle of those words. And, the first United Methodist Church of Crowley lifts high the cross of Christ in the heart of Crowley by reaching, teaching, loving and serving in His name. We have been working with a new intention about our evangelism. Evangelism chairman Marlene Richardson has been leading us in learning our role and improving our invitation.

Facility Priorities

We know that Program drives Facilities: Now and for the short term our building space can accommodate a fair amount of growth. As we grow, we will need to be creative and flexible for maximum effectiveness. The study committee has prioritized facility recommendations into four phases.

Phase 1 is already under way. It includes projects that can be completed soon and without incurring debt. A sign committee has been working on prominent and helpful onsite signs to identify the church and give people clear directions around our campus. That project should be completed by the end of the year paid for from the 2004 Lord's Acre. Plans for repair and facelifts for our restrooms and fellowship hall are progressing. We should begin to see results early next year thanks to the 2006 Lord's Acre. Other emergency and short term repairs and safety additions are also being handled by the trustees. The final recommendation for Phase 1 has begun. An architect has been hired. He has met with the Trustees and the Study Committee. We expect initial drawings for a

master site plan within the next few weeks. Once a master site plan is accepted work on the second phase can begin.

Phase 2: Recommendations include reroofing, extending the roof lines and building a pitched roof on the Fellowship Hall, more ground level storage, enhancing the church exterior, additional parking with landscaping and good lighting.

Phase 3 will require a Capital Campaign fund and/or indebtedness. We recommend a larger Welcome Center Lobby, additional larger handicap-accessible restrooms, more ground level storage, a Portico. This Phase could be started within 1 to 2 years.

Phase 4 would include a church Family Life Center WITH a larger kitchen, restroom with showers, special spaces for boy scouts, spirit moves, youth, quilters and a resource library. This can begin when we as a church are ready.

A Call to Action

You have just heard the Study Committee's findings.

What are we, as a church, going to do now?

What do the Scriptures say we should do?

In Matthew 22, verses 37 and 39, Jesus declared the two Greatest Commandments:

1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind."

2. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Then in Matthew 28, verse 19, Jesus issued to each of us the Great Commission:

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

In Matthew 25, verses 14-30, Jesus tells the parable in which the kingdom of God is like a man going to a far country. The man gave to his servants his goods. He gave one 5 talents, another 2 and another only 1, "to every man according to his several ability."

The servant with 5 talents went and traded and doubled them to 10 talents. The servant with 2 talents also doubled them into 4 talents. But the servant with 1 talent dug a hole and hid his master's money.

The master returned. To the first servant who had made 10 talents from 5, the master said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter into the joy of thy lord."

The second servant who made 4 talents from 2 received a similar blessing.

But the servant who dug and hid his master's money explained that he was afraid and he had hidden the money but he returned exactly what was given him. The master called him a "wicked and slothful servant," took the 1 talent from him giving it to the servant who now had 10 talents. The master ordered the unprofitable servant be cast into outer darkness.

John described how the Committee members have researched the resources and opportunities that are here, looked at what other churches are doing, and listened to your needs, ideas and suggestions.

You heard Troy talk about a mission field within a 5-mile radius of the location that is ripe and ready for harvest. You heard Ray discuss a heritage and development that has been cultivated over 100 years.

Linda informed us about children's ministries that are needed and can be accomplished if we commit. Corina told of ways to touch youth in our community that are hungering for attention. Jeannette explained how young adults want programs and relationships and our need to continue growing as a "welcoming" congregation that will make a difference in their lives. Connie described the facilities that will be needed as we provide these programs.

God established this church over 100 years ago in the rural community of Crowley. He nurtured us and grew this church into what it is today. He has blessed it with loyal members with many resources. Our offering collection may not have as big as that at First United Methodist Church of Fort Worth, but we have been blessed with enough. God did not nurture us to hide our talents until Jesus returns. We will not be "wicked and slothful servants."

God also is growing this community into a bustling suburb. The harvest is ready—new families, new children, and new youth. God put us here to do Kingdom work. This work will require an effort from every member of this church, from the smallest child to the oldest adult. We each have been given different gifts and we are called to join together to "love our neighbors as ourselves."

In the future, we will be asked to do some things that are new to us. We will be asked to do some things that may be uncomfortable at times. We will be asked to do some things that we did not know we could do.

For instance, I did not know until this fall that I could assist with children's choirs, but I found I can. Not as an experienced leader, but as someone who cares.

I know you care, or you would not be a part of this church. And "through Christ, all things are possible."

This is our commission: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Be a part of it here, in Crowley, Texas. Let's join in the harvest and multiply the Master's talents. Let's "Reach, Teach, Love and Serve."