
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LAWRENCEVILLE AND THE COMMUNITY WELL

A VISION AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

- ABRIDGED VERSION -

(DRAFT)

SUMMER 2021

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FOREWORD

This document is the result of much prayer, reflection, conversation and not a little number-crunching during a sabbatical that took place in the summer of 2021. My hope is that you read this *Vision and Plan for the Future* with the understanding that it's more a straw man than it is an expectation about setting the future in stone. I have thought deeply about how the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville might reimagine its future based on its illustrious past, as well as the solid foundation of the present; and I have sought to be as specific and detailed as possible in thinking about all the issues and parameters we need to plan for if we might approach making this vision a reality. Therefore, the hard work is still to come, via conversations that leaders must have in the weeks and months that follow, in order to create a vision and a plan that will be owned by our entire congregation.

My thanks go to the many people who helped in the creation of this plan and gave their time and advice to help guide me:

I'm so grateful to my primary readers and mentors Michael Briehtler, Ted Simpson and George Sanderson. Thanks also to Josh Greiner of Faith Church Lafayette; Bob Johnson of the Solihull Institute; Joel Gilland of the Wesley Community Development Corporation; and Sajan Philip of Cardinal Impact Advisors for sharing their time and wisdom. Thank you, Ann Wiley, for your as-always excellent editing help. And finally, thank you to the many leaders not named here who read various versions of this document or otherwise helped support the effort.

My final introductory thought: this plan must be deeply rooted in the gospel, and the Christian values we espouse here at the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the workers labor in vain." (Psalm 127:1) We are not seeking to establish a health club or a concert venue; we are seeking to express, with all the passion we can muster, the care and concern of Christ for our community, and for our members, in so doing proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. And so, I offer my fervent hope that this vision will indeed be consistent with God's will for our "motley crew," the congregation of PCOL.

But now the real work begins.

Jeff Vamos
Summer 2021

NOTE: This document is an abridged version of the full document. Those who wish to have a copy of the full 62-page report need only to contact our office by emailing office@pclawrenceville.org.

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

In 2014, the church called together a Vision and Vitality Team to implement a strategic planning process, which yielded many fruitful directions toward a more vital and sustainable future. The central idea that emerged from this strategic planning process was the creation of a community center that would serve the needs of the village and surrounding area, as a means to express the church's Christian values and provide for a sustainable future.

The years that followed have seen the creation not only of a community center, [the Community Well](#) (TCW), but related programs that are understood to be under the broad umbrella of TCW: [a job training program](#) and a [counseling center](#); in addition [the Lawrenceville Presbyterian Preschool](#) has been brought under the aegis of TCW.

In 2018, PCOL began the "Our Hope for Years to Come" capital campaign, which at the end of July 2021 has yielded \$2.8 million, and which will be adequate for the expansion of our facilities to accommodate a larger vision and program for the Community Well and its associated programs.

What follows is a summary of a detailed plan to develop TCW and its subsidiary programs, as a means to express our Christian mission into the future.

KEY FEATURES OF THE PLAN

Fulfilling these goals will require the congregation to plan carefully and to make the necessary investments toward implementing this plan.

- *Planning.* The plan must be owned by the whole congregation if it is to succeed.
- *Staffing.* We must hire adequate staff to provide for excellent programming within the center by:
 - Hiring a full-time Executive Director for the center.
 - Hiring new part-time staff for communications and marketing; facilitating community service; bookkeeping; and for stewardship and development. Other staff capacity will need to be added.
- *Funding.* We have raised \$2.8 Million for hard-scape (capital improvements), and must provide seed funding for programming, which is recommended come from our endowment.
- *Governance.* TCW and its associated entities must institute appropriate organizational structures for their governance.
- *Partnerships.* TCW delivers its services largely by way of partnerships with existing organizations who agree to certain key values and activities. In turn, partners benefit from a "whole-is-greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts" proposition, gaining more exposure for their programs.

A THEOLOGICAL VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As the Psalmist writes, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” (Psalm 121:1) Such a theological “why” must not simply exist as words on a page but must be deeply integrated into the mindset and ethos of the whole congregation. Such will be the developmental and pastoral task that staff and leaders will need to address going forward as they also grapple with the specific elements of this plan.

A PRIMARY MEANS OF EXPRESSING THE GOSPEL: SERVICE TO OUR NEIGHBORS, AND ENCOURAGING OUR NEIGHBORS TOWARD SERVICE

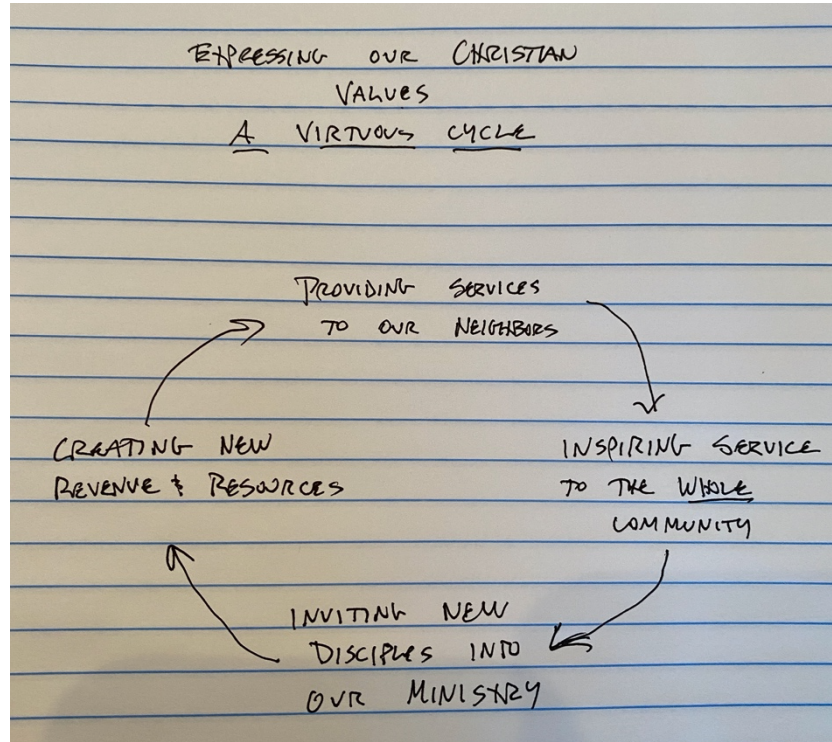
Simply put, the success of the plan and vision contained in this document hinges on a renewed focus on mission and service to those outside our walls. This is a logical continuation of the “missional DNA” of our congregation, via its long history of serving others. One might remember, for example, that our Fellowship Center was once called the Youth Center; it was built in part to provide space to the youth of the community at the time when there was no gym – or high school – in Lawrence.

Although this plan aims at providing more of the revenue and resources to continue, enhance and grow the vitality of our ministry, **it can’t be emphasized enough that the motivation for this path cannot simply be the survival of our congregation into the future. It must be motivated by our Christian love for our neighbors**, and it must involve our entire congregation in the effort. We must begin with the question: *will this vision make our church more alive for the sake of Jesus Christ?* Will it enable the kind of vitality that the first disciples felt at Pentecost? Will it enable our members to grow in their relationship to Christ?

But the mission doesn’t end there; essential to this approach is to encourage our neighbors also to roll up their sleeves and participate in the well-being of the community as a whole, through service. It will hopefully be evident that this part of the mission is integral to the business strategy contained in this document.

EXPRESSING OUR CHRISTIAN VALUES AND CREATING A VIRTUOUS CYCLE

The business strategy embodied in this document seeks to express our Christian values by creating a virtuous cycle as the following graphic illustrates.



- We express our Christian love for our neighbors through the services TCW offers the community (some free, some paid).
- We engage those who come to get involved with service *to* the community, which also expresses the church's values.
- People will come to know the church through TCW programs and through our members outreach to them; some will become core members of our church.
- TCW services (paid) will contribute to financial sustainability, as well as contributions from new members.

DISCERNING THE TIMES: ENABLING BUSY INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO REACH OUT BEYOND THEMSELVES

We discovered through our strategic planning process that families are stressed partly because so much of their energies go inward, toward their own family's well-being; for so many families, there is a sense that "something's missing." We discerned a real need to give families the opportunity to be in service to their neighbor, as a way toward wholistic family wellness. This is part of TCW's mission: to engage families and individuals in service to their community.

THE CHURCH'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS MISSION IS ESSENTIAL

This vision will only succeed if we enable all the members of the church to participate in TCW's mission and connect it to the church's mission. TCW can't just be a source of cash to fund our ministry; it must become our mission and ministry.

Some of the services of the center will be provided for a fee, such as fitness and wellness classes. But we must provide a robust program of free programming to meet the critical needs of our neighbors, such as life-skills classes, seminars on money management, parent support groups, community support groups, and community-building programs.

As we develop TCW, we need to find ways to encourage all members to participate, and to link our core mission with the program of TCW. Here are some other ideas for involving members:

- Members will become ambassadors as **participants in TCW programming**.
- We will provide training and instruction for members to **invite our neighbors to participate in TCW programming**.
- All members will be given the opportunity **to create programming within TCW**, aimed at attracting and serving our neighbors.
- Members will **participate with our neighbors in TCW programs for community service**.
- Members will be invited and equipped to **serve as volunteers within the center**.
- It will be critical that members **serve in governance of TCW and its related programs**.

THE BIGGEST RISK IS NOT TAKING ENOUGH OF A RISK

As mentioned above, to implement this vision will require the church to take on the risk required to make it happen. Though churches are often uncomfortable with risk, of all institutions it ought to be capable of boldly taking on risk *for the sake of its mission* in the faith that God will provide for success. According to our own *Book of Order*, “The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.”¹ To be Christian is to have faith that, in the words that our Mission Partner Luc Deratus often uses, “God will provide.” Is it possible God might see us toward a future even more vital and life-giving than we can imagine? Indeed, given our investment and what is at stake, the biggest risk is not risking enough to make this vision a reality.

THE COMMUNITY WELL: A PLAN

PARTNERSHIP RATHER THAN MEMBERSHIP

The goal of TCW is to extend our ministry by creating the “virtuous cycle” mentioned above, which is focused on serving the needs of our neighbors and also encouraging them, in some way and at some level, to participate in our mission to serve the community. We do well not to think of such persons as “non-members,” but rather as partners who are engaged in mission with us. Those who participate in our mission even by just accessing services in the center are partners and thus in that sense members of our community. It is critical that we not think of them

¹ F-1.0301

merely as consumers of our services and “others” but as co-workers in a common enterprise and part of the community of faith.

A FACILITIES USE POLICY THAT BALANCES CHURCH AND TCW PROGRAMMING

We should anticipate the potential tension between TCW programming and programming for core church programs and events. One can imagine church members becoming frustrated because the facility use for the church will be to some extent driven by the programming of the center. Thinking of non-member participants in TCW as partners in our mission will ameliorate this tension. But we should also create a facilities use plan and philosophy that takes into consideration this potential for tension.

DEVELOPING THE NEW SERVICE MODEL, AND GRAND OPENING

We need to anticipate that once the new construction of the Atrium and South Lobby is finished, we will have a “grand opening” for the center complete with a new service plan in place. It’s critical that we plan for this moment accordingly. Staff must be tasked with creating the necessary relationships and agreements with partners before this new opening so that the above advantages are realized. First impressions are lasting, and we need to provide excellent programs and facilities from the get-go.

TIMELINE FOR CONSTRUCTION, AND FACILITIES DESIGN

Our Capital Projects Team is, as of this writing, in the process of seeking construction approval from the Town of Lawrence. They anticipate this will be complete by this fall (2021). They have not adopted a formal timeline but here are target dates for the construction process:

- Fall 2021: Completion of permitting
- Fall 2021: Construction drawings, and contractor bidding
- Early 2022: Begin construction
- Mid-summer to fall 2022: Atrium and south lobby complete.
- Fall 2022: Grand opening of new center
- 2022/2023: Renovation of Fellowship Center and other capital projects (pending available funds)

Although the design for the new construction is largely set via conceptual schematics, leaders and staff/consultant should weigh in on final construction design plans so that the physical space will be as well suited as possible to the services and uses that we envision in the program plan.

REVENUE POTENTIAL

For a full report on estimates for revenue potential based on a per square foot analysis and based on hypothetical schedules, see the unabridged document.

START-UP INVESTMENTS

We have raised \$2.8 for capital improvement and expansion, which will improve our facilities and make possible a robust program for TCW. It would be quite foolish of us if we invested this money in “hardscape” without deploying adequate capital for the soft costs of staffing and other resources to create excellent programming that will attract people and make them feel loved.

FUNDING FOR START-UP AND PROGRAM

We will need to provide some up-front costs that could range from \$35,000 to \$60,000 before the center gets to positive cash-flow. The key question for the Session and other leaders in the months ahead will be where to secure these funds. There are two obvious answers: to raise more money from donors, or to borrow the funding from our endowment.

Our endowment is the logical choice in providing these resources, because 1) Our endowment corpus has grown 22.4% over the past five years, despite taking draws to fund our ministry; 2) the PPP loans we received enabled us NOT to draw from the endowment in the past 18 months; 3) The stock market has further increased by another 20% this year, further increasing our endowment’s value.

We should be mindful that our primary mission is not to preserve an endowment; it is to deploy our resources faithfully and wisely toward the propagation of the gospel. At times we must risk these resources for the sake of the future, but carefully and in accordance with a plan, while making it a long-term goal to increase our endowment.

STAFFING PLAN

The following proposed plan is to be phased over time and is meant as a beginning point for discussion with the Personnel Committee, Session and others. We will need more expertise to help us with the right amount and type of staffing to achieve our goals and provide excellent services.

HIRING AN EXECUTIVE LEADER

Key to this staffing strategy is the hiring of a competent, professional and energetic full-time executive leader for TCW who will further develop and implement this vision and plan. Moreover, such an individual should see his/her work as *ministry*, since the integration of the center with the church’s overall ministry is paramount. This proposal also envisions the hiring, over time, of several other staff persons who will fall under the supervision of the center’s executive leader; some existing staff will also need to increase hours. This staffing proposal aims at maximum efficiencies and economies of scale by having staff serve the administrative needs of both the church and TCW.

The hiring of a professional Executive Director for TCW, who will also supervise some of the business functions of the church, will relieve the Pastor/Head of Staff from having to be a primary driver of the center, or having to be heavily involved in the business functions of the church.

It is proposed that the church first hire a consultant, during the development/construction phase, before hiring a full-time Executive Director for the center.

OTHER STAFF

For the full staffing plan and proposal, see the unabridged document. Here is a summary of that proposal.

Roles under Executive Director: Assistant Director; Communications and Social Media Director; Director of Community Engagement; Facilities Director (increase hours for existing); Bookkeeper; Stewardship and Development Consultant. Additional hours may be required for the following existing staff: Accounting Consultant; Facilities Director; Office manager.

BUDGET PROJECTIONS

This budget analysis sees getting to break-even sometime late in the 2022/2023 fiscal year. This first budget represents a mid-case scenario, between best- and worst-case. (These analyses are contained in unabridged document.)

The Community Well and Related Programming					
Projected Profit and Loss - Mid Case					
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Income					
Community Well Programming	17,000	147,256	213,521	256,225	271,599
Preschool	10,000	12,000	15,000	18,000	23,000
Counseling Center	2,000	7,000	22,000	27,000	30,000
Job Training Program - cost sharin	1,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total Net Revenue	30,000	168,256	252,521	303,225	326,599
Expenses					
Staffing Costs	60,400	112,310	178,646	183,112	187,690
Advertising and PR	500	5,000	5,500	6,000	6,500
Equipment	1,200	3,000	3,300	3,500	3,700
Insurance*	1,500	5,000	5,500	6,000	6,700
Building Maintenance*	0	11,000	13,000	14,000	16,000
Cleaning*	1,200	5,500	6,000	7,000	7,700
Website and technology expenses	2,000	2,500	3,000	3,300	3,500
Utilities*	1,500	3,434	7,000	7,700	8,200
Other Expenses	2,000	5,000	5,500	6,000	6,300
Total Expenses	70,300	152,744	227,446	236,612	246,290
Income - Expense	(40,300)	15,512	25,075	66,614	80,309
*These items represent increased expenses in addition to those in current church budget, attributable to center activity					

MARKET ANALYSIS & DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Critical to our planning is having adequate data about the people we are planning to serve in our community and what services are most desired by them. We have begun this process via a marketing survey. The study is still in the data-gathering phase. We also ought to plan several community focus group events to receive live feedback.

Here are a very few gleanings from the initial data:

- The two most desired services in our study thus far are:
 - A large community gathering space for community meetings and performances
 - Adult learning classes and experiences.
- Among the services most desired by parents for their young children:
 - Classes for art, theater and music

OTHER COMMUNITY WELL ORGANIZATIONS: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE

As we've developed the Community Well, we've understood that it is a "big tent" under which other separate organizations, which further the church's mission, can also operate. Here is a list of the organizations currently under the organizational structure of TCW:

- **The New Directions Counseling Service (NDCS)**, currently a program of the church.
- **The Lawrenceville Presbyterian Preschool (LPP)**, a separate 501c3 non-profit and subsidiary of the church.
- **The WorkWell Partnership (WP)**, a separate 501c3 non-profit and subsidiary of the church.

The Community Well itself is currently a program of the church with a separate steering committee but no separate 501c3 status. It cannot receive charitable donations as a separate entity, although one can make a gift to the church and earmark it for the Community Well.

COMMUNITY WELL ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TASKS

Largely due to the pandemic and TCW's program being on hold, its steering committee has not met for some time. A top priority for staff and leaders will be to recruit and rebuild this steering committee as part of a larger effort to develop TCW as a separate organization but with oversight from the church.

THE LAWRENCEVILLE PRESBYTERIAN PRESCHOOL

LPP has made significant strides in integrating its program with the church and the Community Well. These are goals and milestones that the leadership of the Session and LPP should consider as they plan together for the future.

- **Continue expansion to full-day programming**, up to 3pm.
- **Expand service to 5:30** to cover the full workday by creating afternoon enrichment programs, possibly in partnership with the YMCA. These afternoon programs could be open to non LPP children.
- **Expand capacity and enrollment.** Pre-school is likely to be in much demand if the economic stimulus package passes; it will feed programming for TCW as well.
- **Ensure co-marketing with Community Well** by offering some joint programming, and paying attention to good communication and PR with parents and the community.

THE NEW DIRECTIONS COUNSELING CENTER

The New Directions Counseling Center (NDCC) has been operating for approximately five years on a model similar to that of the Community Well—i.e. using a partner to provide services—and has some success providing individual counseling. But its greatest success has been in forging a relationship with the public schools by connecting them with local mental health services, and by co-creating programs with them aimed at the mental health of children and youth.

Providing counseling will be critical to the program of TCW. It was a clear need we discovered in our original strategic planning process. The proposed way forward for the NDCC is to continue the current program, which relies on partnership with the Council for Relationships in Philadelphia. We will also continue to build our relationship with the public schools. However, it makes sense for our energies to be directed first toward the TCW's program needs, and then to expand the NDCC's program. Kyle Anderson will be continuing to develop the NDCC's program.

WORKWELL JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

[WorkWell](#) is a job training program for formerly incarcerated individuals; it is also the direct result of the strategic planning process of 2014. A key strategic value of WorkWell is in providing a means for both PCOL and TCW to offer real opportunities for human-to-human community and service. As WorkWell develops, great care should be taken so that its mission, program, and leadership does not drift away from the mission and program of TCW and the church but remains integral to them.

OTHER KEY PLANS

There are other key areas of church life that leaders should prioritize as we plan for TCW's expansion: stewardship and worship. A fuller statement of these proposals is contained in the unabridged version of this plan.

STEWARDSHIP (GENEROSITY):

It is essential that the church shift from a "raising funds" mentality, toward a "fostering generosity" culture. This means that our primary mission is to first want generosity *for* our members, not *from* them. At the center of our mission should be creating generous disciples able to experience the joy and fruitfulness of giving and using their resources for God's Kingdom. If we do that, we should have faith that the money for our ministry will follow.

PLANNED GIVING GOALS

In the last 15-20 years, few significant gifts have come through our planned giving circle, The Maidenhead Society, despite the excellent work of our Planned Giving Team, and some notable current gifts secured via their work. This begs for more time and attention. The Pastor/Head of Staff is committing more time to this, and it is recommended that we hire a new staff Consultant for Stewardship and Development, mentioned in the staffing plan above, to assist in this effort.

ENDOWMENT GOALS

Our current endowment stands at \$1.8 million as of spring 2021. We have already secured a legacy gift in excess of \$300,000 for the endowment through our capital campaign. Included in the unabridged version of this plan are specific recommendations for goals related to building our endowment.

WORSHIP

Our new plans to reach out to our neighbors, as a core aspect of our mission, suggest that we also rethink our worship—the when perhaps more than the what.

RETHINKING 10AM, WINK AND SUNDAY SCHEDULE

For many, our Worship in a New Key service has been integral to the spiritual formation of many of our members who prefer an alternative style of worship. However, the smaller numbers this service is currently attracting call us to rethink whether we might better use our staffing and other resources to make it easier for potential new worshippers to join in the worship life of PCOL, both through that service and our traditional worship service. It is proposed that the Worship Committee engage the congregation in a process of evaluating our worship schedule; specifically, whether we might consolidate both worship services in the same block of time, with children's programming and table fellowship as aspects that allow attendees at both services to blend.