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TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, OWATONNA, MN (KJA 2003205)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT INTERVIEWS

Date/Time of Interviews: March 11, 2003; 9:00 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Purpose:

The purpose of the interviews was to allow the Architect to ask questions and learn about the unique needs of Trinity Lutheran Church and to allow participants and Church leaders to express their views of the facility, its deficiencies, and needs for the future.

Participants:

During the course of the day approximately 28 groups and committees were represented in discussion with the Architect, comprising some 65 individual participants.

Introduction to the Day:

The Architect prefaced the effort with all groups that this was a “dare to dream” day and it was preferable that they disregard budget and logistics for now. Participants were very receptive and understanding of the logic for this approach and the importance of being this broad and general at this point in the planning process.

General Comments:

- With virtually all groups there was a willingness to be open to new ideas, to consider options, and even to consider “significant dramatic change.”
- Everyone expressed a willingness to cooperate in the planning process, share space to the extent practicable, etc.
- All participants expressed significant dedication to this church, its past, present, and new mission for the future (Discipleship Model).
- Many expressed some sense of urgency that something be done in terms of facilities quickly, as the existing facility is cramped, inhibiting growth, etc.
- In virtually all sessions, needs were translated to basic human levels regardless of age, situation, or use of the facility.
- Quality of the church, education, visiting experience was very important to many participants and voiced many different times in many different ways.
- There was wonderful candor and humor evident in these interviews for which the Architect was grateful.
- Virtually all expressed a need for a strong, concise vision for the future direction of Trinity Lutheran Church regardless of what the facility outcome may be.
- A recurring goal was that this be a “small group ministry within a large church.”
- An emotional attachment to the existing building was recognized by most participants, however, newer members and younger members seemed to be more concerned about the adequacy of the facilities than

the history of the building or even its aesthetic appeal. In other words, if users are impacted negatively by the functional inadequacies of a facility, change is warranted and needed.

- In various ways throughout the day it seemed that an appropriate window for planning is for 20-25 years. (Recognizing that the crystal ball gets hazy this far into the future.)
- Many people expressed a desire to be open-minded to the “big picture” and indicated that the possible solution may need to a “big vision to do a big project.”

General Needs Categories and Comments:

- A number of specific areas are woefully inadequate in size.
- Space problems lead to inefficiency: additional burden on staff and volunteers.
- There are sound conflicts at many events throughout the facility that inhibit the functions within given spaces.
- There was some concern about data privacy and confidentiality issues – particularly in the administrative office area.
- Many people indicated that the kitchen needs serious attention and recognized the role of food in fellowship and communion.
- Many areas are lacking basic services such as adequate lighting, electrical outlets, plumbing, and ventilation.
- Many different groups said in different ways that the building needs to be fully accessible and welcoming. Most recognized that the present accessibility features are somewhat limited.
- Code deficiencies need to reviewed and improved.
- Maintenance needs are a serious concern and have been done on a minimal basis recently pending the outcome of a facilities plan so that money is wisely invested.
- There is an inability to add new programs, serve additional people because of the limitations of the facility.
- The Congregation needs to serve youth: educationally, spiritually, and socially. Youth need “their own space.”
- A viable and efficient administration suite is imperative to run an operation of this size with its growth potential.
- Recreation was brought up by many different groups in different ways.
- Many participants expressed the importance of music in all programs and activities regardless of the representative group.
- The Sanctuary is just too small and there is a preference for “seating in the round” to decrease the distance from the Chancel to the furthest worshipper and build a greater sense of fellowship.
- There is a significant lack of large meeting areas, multi-purpose spaces throughout the facility.

This was a very exciting, exhilarating, and exhausting day for the Architect! It was an excellent start to building the dialogue necessary for a proper planning process, which will be continued in a subsequent meeting with the Congregation, additional groups not able to attend the initial interviews, etc. The Facilities Task Forces supported the Architect at all areas in wanting to be open and responsive to the needs of individuals and to give all participants in the church a number of opportunities to input their ideas and thoughts.

Recorded by: David I. Kane, President