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Building Thoughts and Fund Raising

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The following information reflects my thoughts and does not represent any committee or the board.

I feel that we need to have some more facts in front of our membership so that we can make intelligent and informed decisions. We need to think and debate some of the issues and options available to us before the building consultant from Prairie Star District returns to work with us in January. I also want to clarify some fund raising principles and concepts to folks who ask my opinion since I have done some work in that area.

I have been volunteering substantial time the last three years on several committees as well as interviewing and surveying our members and friends for the work of those committees. In gathering data from members, our meeting space has been a big issue. Most folks would like to meet in a more aesthetic space and many feel that we are reaching the limits of our current meeting space. I would also like to say that some folks do not mind our current space and don't feel that we are at the limit yet. I would say the latter are in the minority, but there are those with those opinions and they need to be respected.

I would also like to emphasize the challenge of trying to find space that would meet our needs at a price that we can afford to pay. Several on the building committee have spent years looking at different situations. It is not an easy task and I am sure that if you have a strategy for the building committee to try, they would be open to it.

Building Thoughts

What are our options? I will briefly list what I think are some of our options and would welcome dialogue in the newsletter or at a meeting after one of our Sunday services.

- 1. Remain where we are and maximize our usage of the space.** Can we make it more attractive? Can we negotiate with the Center to see if we could make some changes? Our current cost for this space is \$200 per month. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this space?
- 2. Try to rent or lease new space.** We currently use about 4600 sq. ft. including space for meeting, religious education, kitchen and storage.
 - Should we try to rent the same amount of space with a meeting room, religious education class rooms (4), kitchen?
 - Should we try to rent less space? Could we get by with a meeting room and two classrooms and no kitchen?
 - Could we rent one large Sunday meeting space, and have RE at a different time?
 - Current commercial rental rates are \$8.00 per square foot. To rent a 5000 sq. ft. space would be \$4000 per month plus utilities. A 1500 sq. ft. space at \$1200. This would be for a space used only by our Fellowship, not shared space.
 - Do we have a friend or member who would give us a better rate?
- 3. Rent space from another church or other organization.**
 - Would we be willing to meet on a different day? Most churches want the Sunday morning prime time. (The Seventh Day Adventist and Jewish synagogue are already used on Sundays).
 - Would we be willing to meet after 11:00 AM on Sundays or in the afternoon or evening?
 - Would you meet on Saturdays or some weeknight?
 - Would we lose or confuse our identity meeting in the same building as another religious group?
- 4. New construction.** Why not buy some land and build our own? According to an architect friend, if we want 5000 sq. ft. for a building, parking for 100 to 150 people, and some green space, we would need approximately three acres. Land located with access to roads and utilities would be priced conservatively in the area of \$100,000. A 4500 sq. ft. building at \$60 per sq. ft for construction costs would be about \$270,000. This would be a "no frills" building on one level. A two-story would require an elevator. This would not include furnishings.
- 5. Buy existing building.** Recently two more existing buildings have been listed on the market. The Christian Science building at King and West at \$200,000 and the old English Lutheran Church at 16th and Cass, a beautiful

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brick building in a great location at \$377,000. The mortgage payments for these two would be \$1900 and \$2700 per month on a 25 year mortgage. We would have to add another \$1000 to 2000 per month for insurance, utilities, janitorial, furnishings etc.

6. Buy land and save to eventually build a new building. This raises some of the same questions as in #4 above.

7. Location- What are the prioritized locations should we be fortunate enough to be able to have to choose? Are there locations that are definitely out and not to be considered? Is North La Crosse, Onalaska, Central La Crosse the favored? Would we consider Coon Valley, Barre Mills, La Crescent, Dakota, Amsterdam, Holmen, Trempealeau ? (I have seen some buildings in Dakota and Amsterdam. What is in and what is definitely out and not to be considered so we don't waste time looking there? People will tend to drive about the same time to church as to work or a little farther if they live remote from their congregation. Ten miles, twenty minutes? We come from La Crescent, Winona, Onalaska, La Crosse, West Salem

These are the options I see. I would like to hear from folks who may have different options or ideas.

Fund Raising Thoughts

These are the ways non-profits raise funds to accomplish their missions.

- **Annual canvass/campaign** to raise funds for operating. We do this in the fall.
- **Endowment** -We are currently developing our endowment policy to encourage folks to name the Fellowship in their estate planning and wills. Usually endowment funds are placed at financial institutions and only the interest is used by the organization and the principal is not touched. This helps to provide long term stability.
- **Special events**- auctions, sales etc.(it takes a lot of cookie dough to raise a half-million dollars!)
- **Capital Campaign**- Special drives to raise funds for building or remodeling

Why not have a capital campaign to raise funds to accomplish one of our above options?

There are some rules of thumb in raising money. One of those rules of thumbs is "the rule of thirds"

- One third of your goal will come from the top ten donors (10% from one donor)
- One third of your goal will come from the next 100 donors
- One third of your goal will come from all the other donors

If you begin to play with the numbers here, you will see what kinds of donations would be needed to raise certain amounts of money. Usually capital campaign donations are given over a three to five year period in addition to one's annual giving. If we were trying to raise \$377,000 for the Old English Lutheran church for example, we would need a couple lead donors in the range of \$50,000 or \$10,000 per year for five years. We would need about four to six donors in the \$25,000 range and many donors in the \$10,000 to \$15,000 range. The remainder of the gifts would be \$5000, \$1000, on down.

As you can see, lead donors are critical to raising capital funds unless of course; you are one of the fortunate non-profits who has been blessed with a bequest in the hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars; someone has donated land or appreciated property. Our fellowship has received some generous bequests and gifts and the total in our Building Fund is currently around \$40,000.

Can we get help from the Unitarian Universalist Association?

Yes and no. There are some possibilities but to get any substantial help (if funds are available) a local association has to have a capital fund raising drive and written documentation that it has an amount equivalent to at least three times the congregational pledges in the most recent canvass. In our case this would be about \$96,000.

As I said above, I would like to see some dialogue on these issues before the next consultant meeting so we can make some more decisions and are prepared to take action. We have been moving forward. We have doubled our pledging over the last two years! We have accumulated much of the data that we need and now we need to keep things moving so we are not acting in a crisis situation.