INTRODUCTION

During the spring of 2013, Mike Kocolowski and Malcolm Puckett conducted a feasibility study of the congregation Centerville Christian Church, Centerville, Indiana. The purpose of this Feasibility Study is to provide preparation and specific recommendations for a capital fundraising campaign.

The Feasibility Study involves independent analysis of the perceptions of church leaders, staff, members, visitors, donors, and prospective members through focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys. Each component is intended to provide data independently of the other components thereby enabling three different mechanisms for analysis.

SWOT ANALYSIS

On Saturday, May 11, 2013 a group of core leaders, staff, and volunteers participated in a SWOT analysis. These individuals were divided into two groups. Each group was asked to independently reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within Centerville Christian Church. This session was deemed productive in that it reflected a broad cross-section of the congregation and reflected a significant portion of the core supporters and leaders. This report provides the results from that session.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted of a broad cross-section of the congregation. Individuals were chosen at random from the general church mailing list. Interviews included staff members, elders, teachers, volunteers, young families, older church members, teenagers, and visitors.

A total of twenty-nine (29) interviews were conducted. These interviews have provided high confidence in the findings of this study. Likewise, the interviews were critical to developing the mass survey.

SURVEYS

Surveys were mailed to every household on the general church mailing list totaling approximately 500 surveys. Of that total, 237 surveys were completed and returned. That provides a 47% response rate, which represents a very significant portion of the congregation.
SWOT FOCUS GROUPS

STRENGTHS
• Strong Foundation & Heritage – historical church; Bible-based, Restoration; regional
• Stewardship – giving & management of money; no debt; 20% missions giving
• Leadership – unity of staff & leaders; abundance of talent; desire for growth/outreach
• Family Focused – children’s & youth programs; prayer chain; senior citizens
• Serving – mission (local & international); volunteerism; gifted laity
• Biblical Literacy – study groups; Holy Spirit active;
• Broad Range of Talent – diverse backgrounds and professions; all ages

WEAKNESSES
• Facilities – safety; outdated; parking; technology; lack of foyer; no dedicated space; handicap accessibility; needed maintenance and repairs
• Alignment & Consistency – coordination of ministries; outreach; worship
• Communication – to members (but improving); between leadership teams; slow decision-making; scope of responsibility & delegation is lacking; preparation for annual meeting
• Low Number of Young Adults – lack of programming to 18–30
• Spiritual Maturity – applying NT principles; lack of understanding of Restoration principles; fear of change based on past experiences
• Weak Prayer Culture
• Outreach – lack of shepherding; 80/20 involvement;
• Use of Technology – insufficiency in worship, sound system, classrooms & training
• Divisiveness – lack of involvement; traditionalism; stereotypes; generational divide; worship styles

THREATS
• Negative Impact by Incurring Debt
• High Unemployment leading to Shrinking Community
• Social Fragmentation (Drug/Crime in County Leads to Decline in Centerville)
• Lack of Leadership in Area Communities
• Political Threats (tax deduction revocation; Islam; Un-Christian Culture)
• Complacency (moral apathy)
• Hostility to Christian Church

OPPORTUNITIES
• Attractive Schools (voucher program)
• Mobile Culture (Interstate 70)
• Use of Existing Facilities in the Future
• Growing Ethnic Population
• Mission Investment (local & worldwide)
• Evangelism & Discipleship to “Graying” Community
• Need for Athletic Facilities
• Centerville 200th Anniversary
• Benevolence with Current Economy
• Childcare & Adult Daycare
SURVEYS & INTERVIEWS

Respondents

Of 500 surveys distributed, 237 were completed and returned reflecting a **47% response rate**. This is a significant portion of the Centerville congregation. Historically, congregational surveys have averaged between 20% - 30% replies.

The vast majority of responses identified themselves as church members (84%) while some of the remainder (8%) were Staff, Elders, or Deacons.

The respondents were reasonably split in Sunday morning worship attendance with:

- **49% (8:00 am service)**,
- **22% (9:20 am service)**,
- **29% (10:40 am service)**.

A wide range of respondent’s age and their years associated with Centerville suggest a broad variety of people from throughout the congregation are represented with this survey.

**Observations:**

From many different perspectives the participants in this survey represent a diverse cross-section of Centerville congregation. Therefore, the survey results should be taken with high confidence. **These responses should genuinely reflect the overall opinions and perceptions of the congregation at large.**
Ratings

Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of the congregation on a scale of 1 to 10 with the following associations:

1 - very poor, 3 - less than adequate, 5 - adequate, 7 - more than adequate, 10 - extremely good.

Responses were averaged reflecting a mid-point of opinions. Likewise, a standard deviation was calculated on all responses. Standard Deviation reflects the divergence of answers. A higher standard deviation reflects less unity on a given subject and rating. Conversely, a lower standard deviation reflects more agreement on that subject and rating.

1 - very poor, 3 - less than adequate, 5 - adequate, 7 - more than adequate, 10 - extremely good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AM Worship</th>
<th>Children's</th>
<th>Friendly</th>
<th>Att. Visitors</th>
<th>Finances</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Unity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
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<td>7.25</td>
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<td>Std. Dev.</td>
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<td>1.68</td>
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<td>1.81</td>
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<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Preaching</th>
<th>Lost</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Info</th>
<th>Life Grps</th>
<th>Useful?</th>
<th>Family</th>
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<tr>
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<td>6.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
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<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.05</td>
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</table>

Centerville Ratings

![Graph showing ratings and standard deviation for various aspects of the congregation.](image-url)
**Observations:**

Centerville rates **very high** in Children’s Program, Sunday Worship and Preaching. The **lowest** ratings for Centerville were in Reaching the Lost, Information from Leadership, and Attracting Visitors.

There was overwhelming **agreement** and satisfaction with Worship and Children’s Programming.

The highest amount of **disagreement** among respondents was seen in Information from Leadership, Usefulness of Facilities and Ministering to Members.

**Strengths**

Respondents were asked to **choose three areas** that represent the greatest strengths of the ministry at Centerville.
Weaknesses

Respondents were asked to choose three areas that represent the greatest weaknesses of the ministry at Centerville.

Observations:

The areas rating the highest as strengths were Worship, Preaching and Children’s Program.

For weaknesses, Communication, Facilities and Church Unity stand out with a significant number of responses.

Recommend?

An overwhelming majority of 95% of respondents indicated that they would recommend this congregation as a church home to someone.

In addition 73% of respondents indicated they had actually invited or recommended Centerville to someone within the last six months.
Giving

Ninety-four percent (94%) of survey respondents indicated they were active donors.

Parking

Parking is a major concern due to obvious limitations. Although a large number of respondents have had no problem with parking, a majority of respondents expressed varying degrees of difficulty.

Essentially 50% of respondents have no difficulty with parking. The remaining 50% have had difficulty or witnessed others having difficulty parking.

Observation:

With such a large portion of the congregation having difficulty parking, it is a safe assumption that visitors/potential members are definitely having trouble parking. This is most likely a significant obstacle for further growth under the current structure.
Current Facilities & Future Planning

Respondents were asked for their perception of the greatest challenges with the current facilities.

Foyer Space, Parking and Classroom Space were cited most often as those areas offering greatest challenge.
A majority of responses (66%) favor relocation. There is a significant minority (27%) that prefers renovating existing facilities. This issue reflects some manner of division between members.

Finally, respondents were asked how their giving would change if a two-year capital campaign were launched for expansion (either relocation or renovation).

Observation:
Thirty-six percent (36%) of respondents indicated that their giving would increase during a capital campaign. However, sixty-four percent (64%) indicated that their giving would not increase for a capital fundraising effort.
**Suggestions & Recommendations:**

There are typically three potential outcomes from a Feasibility Study:

1) *Proceed immediately with a capital campaign and a new building project; or,*
2) *Wait until certain obstacles can be overcome prior to launching a campaign, or,*
3) *Do not pursue the desired project – too many factors are impeding a good outcome*

1) **RELOCATION** – Even though a majority is in favor of relocation (66%), there is a strong minority group (27%) that would prefer to remain in the current facilities and conduct a renovation. Such a division within the congregation could potentially provide a strong headwind of resistance to relocation.

There is a general acknowledgement among members of the limitations of the existing facilities. Parking is a definite problem. Foyer space for transition between worship services is too confined.

In a practical sense, it is questionable that renovations can be made to the existing facilities in a cost effective manner to address the identified problems. There are real limitations with the existing site for additional parking, foyer expansion, classroom expansion, ADA compliance, etc.

The property by the interstate is a preferred location due to visibility, proximity to a major travel corridor, and overall space for growth. A multi-purpose building that provided for worship, recreation, classrooms, etc. would be a real positive for the Centerville community. **It is recommended to pursue relocation with a long-term vision to maximize potential church growth.**

2) **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN** – A very large majority of individuals (64%) indicated their inability or lack of desire to contribute to any new capital campaign effort. A campaign is designed to inform, excite and motivate people to get involved in campaign giving. However, this level of initial resistance could be a significant drag on any campaign.

There are several factors that seem to be influencing this lack of enthusiasm. Most of the staff are fairly new to the congregation. There is some uncertainty evidenced by the interviews and the surveys about staff performance and interaction.

Additionally, the congregation seems to be ill-informed about Centerville’s financial status and various leadership decisions. This is always an “uphill battle” – keeping people adequately informed. But there are mechanisms the leadership can employ to maximize information to the congregation.
Additionally, there is a heightened level of anxiety from many in the congregation about any future plans, how a new building would help with growth/outreach, what would become of old building, and many people strongly opposed to any debt on a new building.

Therefore, it is recommended to consider waiting to conduct a capital campaign until certain items can be accomplished:

1) **Allow the staff to continue to build relationships** and interact with the congregation, thereby creating more confidence in the leadership.

2) Redouble the effort to **keep the congregation informed about leadership decisions**. Beyond mailings and announcements, it is suggested you dedicate one bulletin board to post financial reports and leadership meeting minutes. Make the congregation aware of that access. (*Note: Many people may be completely unaware how much money the church has in savings, and that could have affected their answers on the survey.*) Consider posting two Elders in a classroom or office each Sunday for people to approach for pastoral issues or organizational concerns. Speak frequently on the leadership’s desire for transparency. All of these efforts would help to keep members more informed.

3) Create a task force that will **be able to explore and articulate what ministry would look like if a relocation project is undertaken**. Begin to create a list of ministries and activities the church could employ with additional facilities on the new property. Also, establish and define how the old facility will be used. These will be crucial elements useful for marketing a future capital campaign.

4) **Determine the size and scope of the future project**. Talk with local contractors about construction costs, timelines, etc. Consider what other churches your size have built and how they have allocated square footage. Create a list of your hierarchy of needs: 1) what’s absolutely necessary; 2) what’s preferred but expendable; 3) what’s “a nice extra” if finances permit.

5) Keep in mind these general principles:

   a. Remember the difference between reality and perception.
   b. Realize that some people who may be opposed to any changes in the church sometimes “come on board” after they see positive results of a new project.
   c. Understand that it’s rare to have unanimous approval of any project or endeavor in a church your size.
   d. Reinforce repeatedly to the congregation that their voice has be heard and prayerfully considered.
   e. Reflect on the costs of doing “nothing” and “something.” Look into the future five or ten years and contemplate what the results of your decision might look like.
   f. Contemplate your options carefully, then make a decision and move forward confidently.