



Grace Lutheran Church- Fox Trust Update – January 19, 2022

In December, the Fox Visioning Committee made a presentation of their progress at the congregational meeting. To those that were present, we wanted to give you some additional detail and to those that were not able to attend, we hope this will bring you up to date.

We recognized that the meeting for approval of a project was rushed. We became aware there was a state and federal grant program (CHIP Grant) available for projects such as ours. The application deadline for the grant was January 7, 2022. The grant money was to be used for infrastructure costs of a project and could have saved us an amount in excess of \$250,000. We apologize if our action felt a bit rushed. We needed approval from the congregation before we could pursue the CHIP grant. Subsequently (in late December), we were told our project would not qualify.

With the failure to qualify for the grant, the committee can step back on the progress of the project to address any concerns of the congregation. So, let's back up a bit and review the process we followed.

As you are probably aware, the Fox Trust unrestricted gift came to Grace from a testamentary bequest of the Fox Family. This was unexpected and nothing more than a gift from God. With the gift comes a huge responsibility. Initially, Pastor James led cottage meetings to discuss potential uses of the trust funds. The church council decided to form a committee that could gather congregational input, study the results, present alternatives to the council for their approval and their recommendation to the congregation. The committee was formed in 2020 and consists of volunteer members of the congregation and, at least, one representative from the council.

We met monthly and sought ways to get congregational feedback. We really wanted to allow the holy spirit to infuse the conversation. The pandemic limited the ability for communication. We led a few post worship Zoom meetings with the congregation to start. The committee then did an initial survey by mail. The results of that survey were shared with the congregation. The first survey was general and open to any ideas that a member might have regarding the use of the funds. Every comment that was returned with the first survey was shared with the council, in writing. We used the first survey to narrow down the options and prepared a second survey for the congregation.

Briefly, the results of the second survey, with regard to the portion of the trust that might be **used to benefit the community**, 40% responded "the homeless" with comments to include adult housing, youth housing, food pantries, mental health, etc. The second highest response was 21% interested in providing Not for Profit space and /or support of existing NFP organizations / projects. The third at 10%, was the support of education including preschool, university support, literacy causes, pastoral and congregation training, Spanish language skills, etc.

When asked what percentage you might like to spend on the improvement, modernization, or maintenance of the existing Grace Property, the average of all responses was 56.33% of the fund. When asked where those funds should be directed, if used to enhance the Grace property, the leading response was to modernize/enlarge bathrooms. The next greatest needs were identified as handicap access, followed by engage independent consultant to evaluate the building, remodel/enlarge/update kitchen, enlarge/remodel Sacristy.

The survey also spoke to the use of funds on local, regional and global needs. It showed a large portion (56%) preferred local use with regional and global following at 23% and 21%, respectively.

The committee had a great deal of discussion following the results of the survey. We engaged John Martin, an architect from Olympia, and Brad Brisbane, an architect with MJ Neal Associates to survey the building. A building vision group was created by the Council to oversee and participate in this process. This group included several members of the congregation, Pastor James, Rich Smallbeck, facility manager and our interns.

The committee asked John Martin to look at the viability of the building. The initial charge was to see if we could accomplish our Church functions on the main floor of the building. This could free up the basement space for some type of mission use. In addition, we asked John to look at the property (land) to determine if there was excess property that could be used for a mission purpose. He came back to the committee with extensive drawings (shared with the congregation at the December meeting) that shows the main floor of the building, if remodeled, could easily service the needs of our church. He also looked at different mission ideas for the basement and was able to create handicap accessibility in two different locations, therefore, creating an independent space. In

looking at the excess property, he came back with three potential ideas: a community garden, homeless college student housing and a gymnasium. Any one of those functions could fit on the property.

The committee recommended pursuing the cottage idea and do further work toward Church modernization and remodel plans. In addition, we recommended the exploration of uses for the basement space. Council approved and scheduled a congregational meeting for mid-December. The council asked the congregation to authorize funds for the construction of the cottages in the amount of \$ 700,000 and for \$60,000 to pursue engineering and architectural plans on the Church remodel. The motions were approved unanimously by the congregational members present.

The decision to proceed with the cottage program supported at the December congregational meeting, was an opportunity to address one of the homeless situations that exists in our area. In Washington State the homeless college student issue is significant. A recent survey showed that 20% of college students are homeless and 60% are housing challenged. Wenatchee Valley College has received a grant to work with homeless students. They are spending a portion of the grant to house four students in their dorm but have no more space. Currently, there are students sleeping in their cars in the WVC neighborhood.

We have had initial discussions with the WVC administration regarding them utilizing and managing the cottages. They were quite excited about the opportunity as the need is huge, yet they cannot get involved until the project is constructed.

We filed a preliminary plan with the city for the projects we were considering. The city determined that all of the proposed projects are permitted under the current zoning of the property. The church remodel and any basement plans would require conditional use and building permits. The cottages are permitted outright under current zoning, so they only require a building permit. Although not required, we have a plan in place to contact the direct neighbors to discuss the project and solicit feedback. We want to be good neighbors throughout this process. The next step would be to complete the site plans for the cottages and apply for the needed building permits.

One additional component we have added is the ability to use one of the cottages as an intern residence. This has the potential to save the church budget about \$ 18,000 per year.

The committee views the next step to address the church remodel project is to meet with church user groups to solicit feedback and adjust the plans as necessary to ensure the remodel plans accommodate the needs of the congregation. These groups would include the staff, youth group, quilting ministry, music, fellowship team, little pantry, etc.

The committee is seeking input from the congregation before proceeding with additional action. Please attend one of the meetings indicated below or contact the church office or one of our team members below to let us know how you feel or questions you may have. In addition, we will call you if you leave a message at the church office.

We will also be presenting Zoom conferences on Sunday, January 23 after worship is completed as well as Wednesday January 26 at 6:30 PM. We will be presenting the progress to date as well as soliciting comments and questions. The Zoom details will be in the church email blast.

What a huge opportunity this is for our Church and the community! We do feel that the holy spirit has been leading us through this process. Thanks to the congregation for its support of these projects!

Prayerfully,

The Fox Visioning Committee

Members:

Pastor James Aalgaard, Robert Bartlett, Judy Conner , Joanne Dalinkus, Intern Anna Ferro(ex-officio), Milt Herman, John McQuaig, Cheryl Salter, Karen Zanol

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