FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rochester, New Hampshire

FEASIBILITY-READINESS STUDY REPORT

PRESENTED BY:

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horizons STEWARDSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Tom Melzoni from Horizons Stewardship conducted a feasibility study for First United Methodist Church (First UMC) in Rochester, New Hampshire. The process included an informational gathering, interviews, and a church wide survey. The historical facility has renovation needs with the steeple being the priority.

In New England, the church steeple is often a center piece of city life and used as a focal point in community marketing materials. The First United Methodist's Church Steeple is such in Rochester, New Hampshire. The clock in the steeple is owned by the city but is currently not operable. A grant was applied for and denied. Hope exists for a more positive response if the church has a successful capital campaign.

Statistical information provided reveals for **2024:**

- Average Worship Attendance: **79**
- Church Membership: **514**
- Pledging Households: **65**
- Giving Households: **111**
- Annual Budget Gifts: **$231,672**
- Other Gifts: **$52,495**

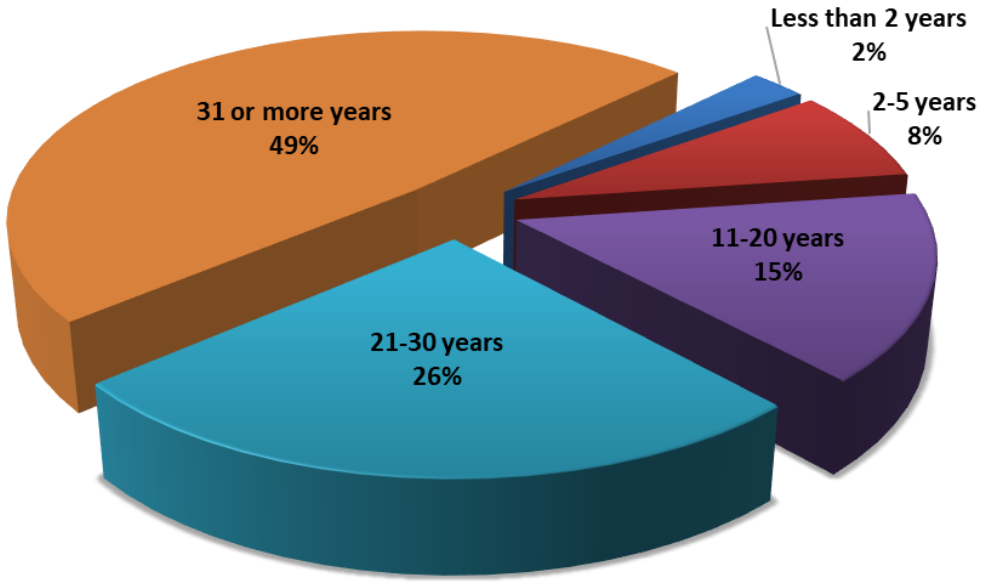
The church has experienced growth in the past **3 years** with contributing households increasing from **93 to 111**. Average worship attendance has increased from **66 to 79.** This is a very remarkable increase noting mainline churches across the USA have experienced a decline. These upward trends are very encouraging.

The following pages contain the actual survey results followed by recommendations about the potential of a capital campaign.

SURVEY RESULTS – 39 RESPONSES

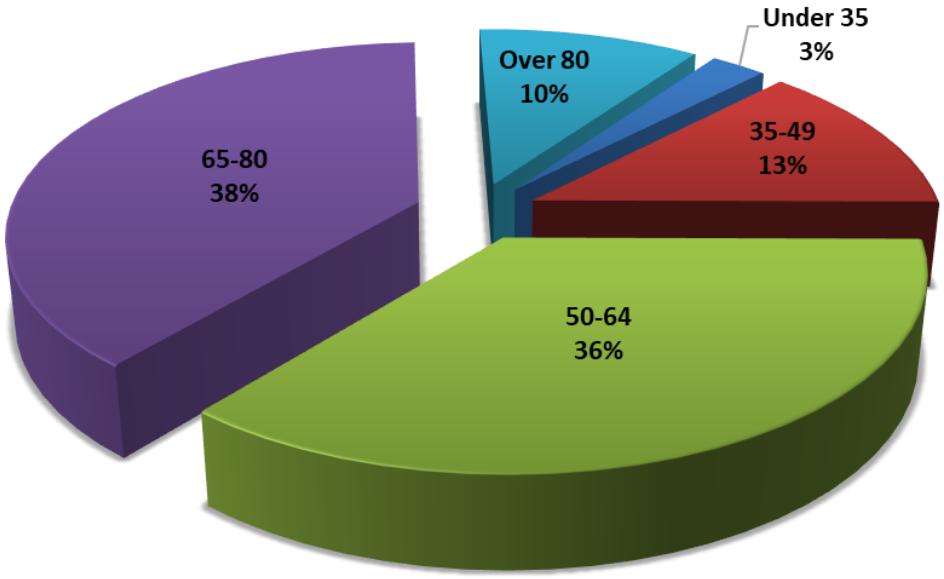
1. How long have you been attending First United Methodist Church?

Less than 2 years	1
2-5 years	3
6-10 years	0
11-20 years	6
21-30 years	10
31 or more years	19



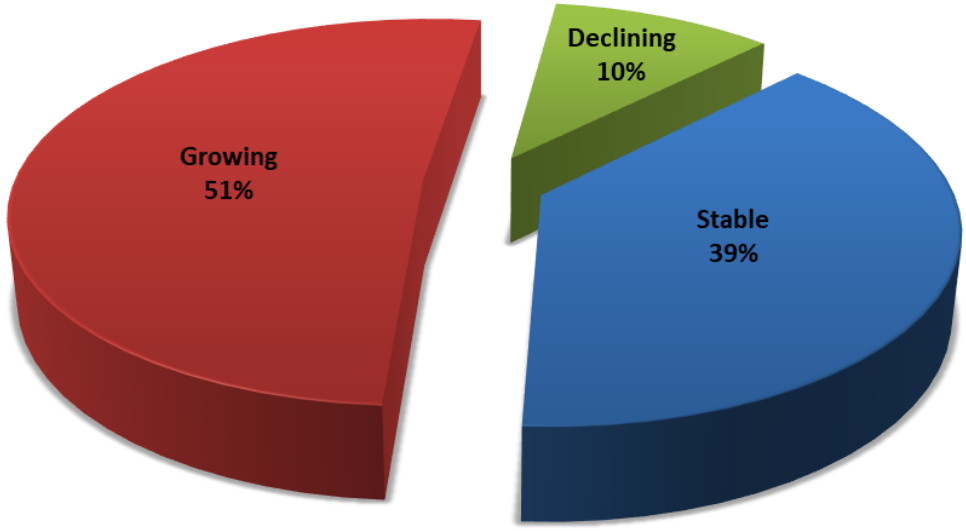
2. What is your age range?

Under 35	1
35-49	5
50-64	14
65-80	15
Over 80	4



3. In your opinion, the church is…

Stable	15
Growing	20
Declining	4



COMMENTS

Stable to growing in recent years following an extended period of decline.

Starting to see more people attending, however, the number of young families attending is trending up very slightly. This is judged by the number of children attending Sunday school, which is very small.

No families.

We are in our late 80's and are unable to attend (we watch the service from home) and we can see the attendance has increased with new families and their children. Praying it continues.

It may be a slow growth, but it is still growing compared to being stuck, or stagnant.

The same core people are asked to serve on all the committees.

Sunday school has grown this year, but attendance hasn't changed much.

We have had new families attending and joining the church.

We are adding new members under Ho-Soon's leadership but hard to tell how much is growth and how much is post-COVID return.

Only during the last couple of years are we starting to get new members.

See more younger families in the last few years.

I love more younger people and families are coming to FUMC.

It seems there are a few new people/families, but I am not attending regularly to really know for sure. So it's definitely trending to growing if it's not in the growing phase!

Church in general is declining, but I feel that our church specifically (FUMC) is holding stable. I feel like our present pastor has connected with people and brought attendance and participation up from where it was.

We have an older congregation, and even though we have families starting to come, we are not quite growing as yet.

Growing back after Covid.

We lost members during Covid. Some still watch at home. The congregation consists of older generation. At this time attendance is picking up with new families.

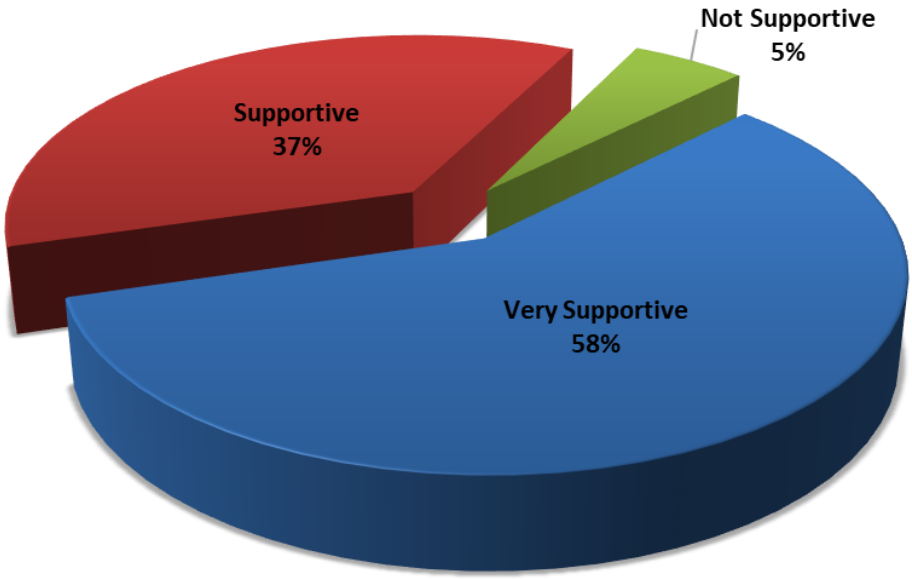
I am excited to see families with children becoming active in our church.

We have seen a few families join and a few who grew up and brought their kids back. We have also seen some members from other areas move in and find our church to be their home.

After what I perceived to be a decline (pre/during pandemic), I feel like FUMC is making a comeback!

4. How supportive would you be of a decision to conduct a capital campaign to raise the funds needed for the steeple renovation?

Very Supportive	22
Supportive	14
Not Supportive	2



COMMENTS

The steeple has to be repaired.

As long as missions and repetitive financial obligations continue to be met.

We know our church needs many repairs and when the building campaign was ongoing we were much younger and supported it, but now it's questionable.

This type of PLAN, that has good structure and planning, will reap rewards as moving forward has its own benefit of signs of life, versus stagnant and no sign of life.

We need to fix the facade of the steeple before there is structural damage.

We don't have a choice, it has to be done to protect our building from more destruction.

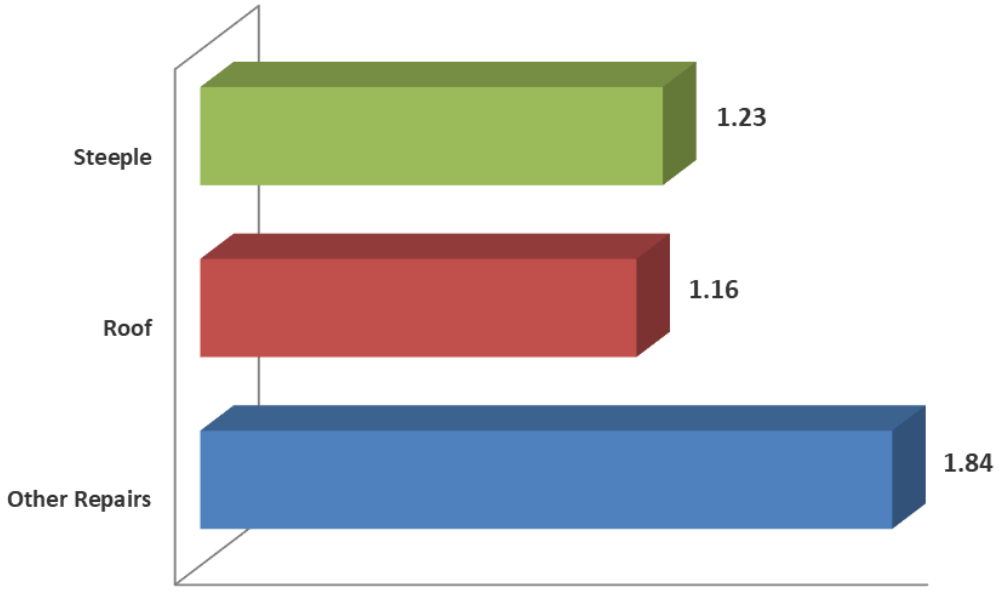
I'll support financially as well as extra work.

This project needs to be done for the survival of our building.

Only because I'm disabled and not able to work. I feel badly about not being able to help financially.

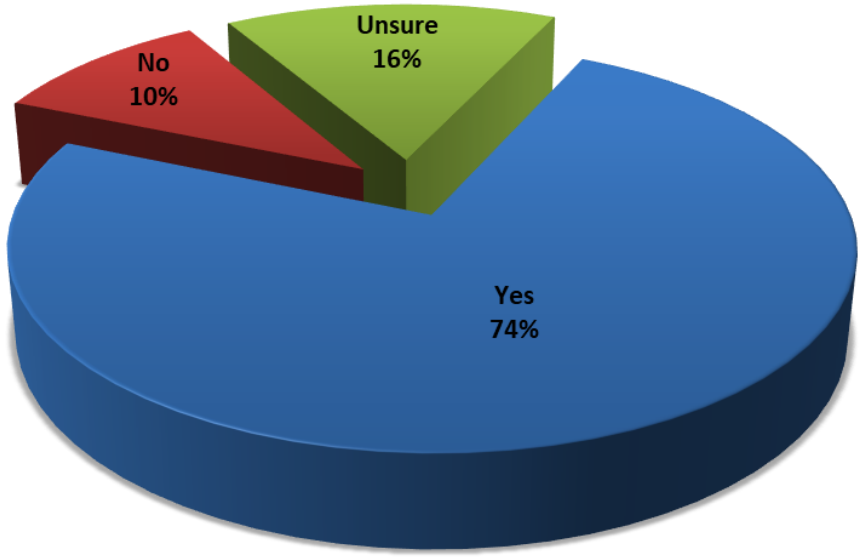
5. How would you prioritize the other projects? (1 being extremely important and 3 being not important)

	1 Extremely important	2 Somewhat important	3 Not important	Weighted Average
Steeple	30	9	0	1.23
Roof	32	6	0	1.16
Other Repairs	8	28	2	1.84



6. Would you prayerfully consider a 3-year gift, over and above your giving, for the current ministry to support the proposed capital campaign?

Yes	29
No	4
Unsure	6



COMMENTS

Money

Money is tight and I can't commit to give anything.

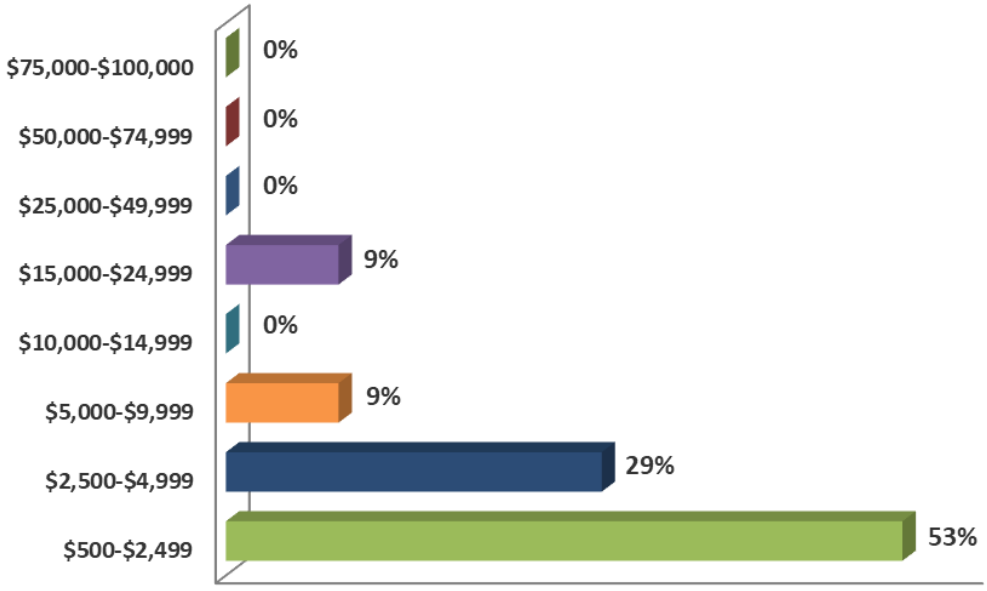
If it is possible, with only receiving social security. I will pray on this and give what I can.

We are retired and living on a fixed income. We cannot increase our contributions of money.

Disabled.

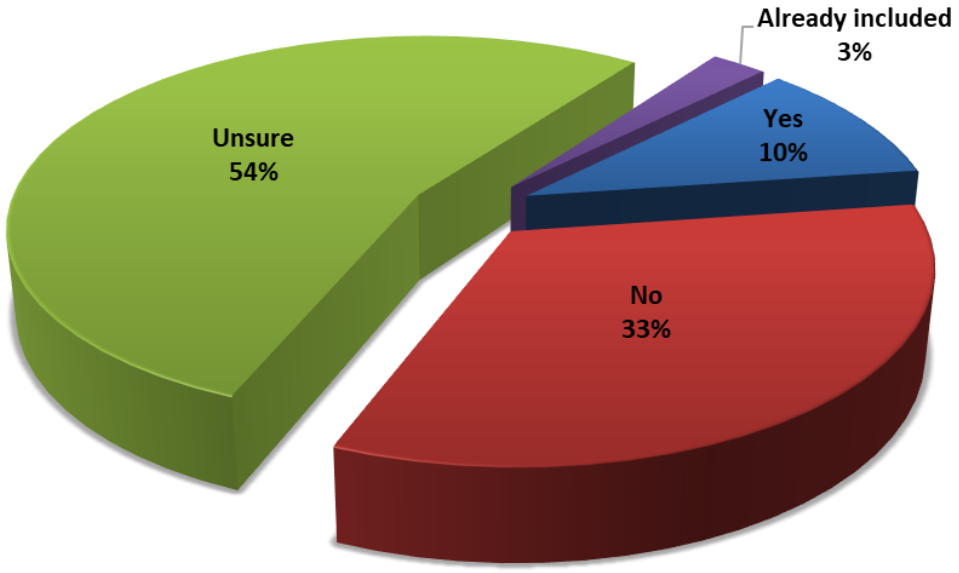
7. What range might you consider for a total 3-year commitment (over and above your contribution to the annual budget)? This is *not* a pledge but an initial indicator.

$75,000-$100,000	0	$10,000-$14,999	0
$50,000-$74,999	0	$5,000-$9,999	3
$25,000-$49,999	0	$2,500-$4,999	10
$15,000-$24,999	3	$500-$2,499	18



8. Will you consider including the mission in your estate planning?

Yes	4
No	13
Unsure	21
Already included	1



9. Are there other ways you would consider contributing to the project?

COMMENTS

Time & energy

I am willing to knock on commercial entities and ask for a donation.

As director of Music, several ideas are being fleshed out as to visiting artists and groups collaborating.

Along with financial support I am willing to work on some of it physically.

Serving on the Trustees and Steeple Committee. Getting quotes from contractors, supervising construction, applying for grants.

One time donation.

Participating in projects the church does.

Helping with suppers.

I would help & contribute to any fundraiser events.

Working on planned fundraisers.

I will be willing to participate in fundraising activities.

Go Fund Me. Maybe someone write a short story on FB of our church and all we do for the city, we might get people from outside our sphere to want to contribute and help us.

I am on the Steeple Committee.

Volunteer

Prayer, personal time, fundraising dinners, office help

I would be willing to work on fund-raising projects.

I could help with fundraising and community outreach.

If I can.

Fund Raisers

10. Who in the city (area), do you think would give to the steeple renovation?

COMMENTS

Verizon (if they are still using the steeple for a tower) Maybe reach out to other cell phone carriers if Verizon isn't still using the steeple?

Next store property owner: Norman Vetter

All Rochester commercial entities as our church IS the Steeple that everyone knows.

Local vendors

The steeple is the first thing people notice coming to the city. And the first time they enter comment how beautiful it is. We would hope businesses downtown and on the outskirts should be contacted also.

I think the Chamber of Commerce might be a good place to start as we are Chamber members. The amount of Restaurants and area business's that give back to their communities is something we can and should study to take our message of Faith that has been here longer than most of those places. We should be proud of how we have built "Community" since 1868 in this place.

I don't live in Rochester, so I am not sure.

Local businesses in our downtown area, Turbocam in Barrington, NH

Hopefully area businesses, professionals and civic organizations, possibly the casino.

Check with the Chamber of Commerce. There might be members of the business community that could help.

Frisbie Memorial Hospital

I have no ideas

I have no idea. I do think Rochester people will step up when they see it is going to fix this steeple.

Not sure. I don't have specific names, but people are generous when it comes to their town, so no matter their denomination, (or none) you never know who would be willing to send us a check. Therefore there needs to be some kind of public campagin that is publically announced and a Venmo account or something created so that people will quickly and easily send off donations when the announcement happens. It would be wise to have several donation appeals and maybe even a "thermometer" of the goal (large) outside of the church so passer-bys can see it daily with the progress updated weekly or bi weekly.

My company, TURBOCAM, may support it as we give in support of many local charities and have a Christian based mission.

Member of the Chamber of Commerce, or Rochester Main Street Project

Historical society

Personal contacts, professional businesses, grants specific to ciity, state historical groups that use the facility

I would reach out to SUR construction, Verizon(the cell tower), Governors Inn, Service Credit Union, Citizen Bank, Studley's Flowers, Eastern Propane, the chamber of commerce could help with contacts, and Rochester in Street.

Whoever uses our steeple for their communication needs should be asked to help. Perhaps the city? I think it would be a good idea to ask the general public. While many are too poor themselves to help out, perhaps there is a benefactor out there!?! Asking benefactors outside of our city might be a smart thing to try to do as well.

Verizon; Norm Vetter

11. What questions need to be answered moving forward?

COMMENTS

Have the steeple & roof been inspected to give us the best current cost estimate? What are some of these other repairs, and are they related to the roof or steeple?

How vital is this renovation, i.e., is the steeple a hazard to safety and security to people and property adjacent to the church?

We need to get quotes for the work.

Will the City contribute to the restoration of the City Clock?

More information about the repairs other than the steeple. Making the steeple pretty is not our only reason to raise the money.

That we have a good amount of money from the church initially.

Not at the moment but we are sure some will present themselves.

How will this benefit the entire city?

What is the actual cost for the project?

12. Please note any comments you feel would be helpful for us to know.

COMMENTS

This project will take years to complete so we all need to work together.

We need to have a proper sales/donation piece that shows how we support the whole city (soup kitchen, Scouts, etc.)

Church dinners

Making sure of true commitments before moving forward.

Now that people are starting to join our church I hope they don't get upset with the many requests for additional finances. It will be a subject that will have to be approched tenderly.

This is a very important and long overdue project.

To generate a personal contact list ask congregation for names of 5 people they would be willing to reach out to ask for contributions.

I think we should connect with other groups in the church, scouts, fellowship kitchen, AA groups to help as well.

The city has many poor residents, and many that benefit in some way by FUMC. I think the more parties that are involved the better it will be.

May need to consider a 5 year pledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pastor Ho-Soon has gained the respect of the First UMC community. Her preaching and leadership have been received well by the people.
- The committed core has great passion for their church. This is so important for the long-term renewal of the church and a successful capital campaign.
- The survey and interviews reveal that an intentional effort to raise funds for the case as presented has been received well by an overwhelming majority. The roof and steeple are the priority needs according to those responding on the survey.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) of those responding to the survey said they would make a financial gift to a capital campaign. Sixteen (16%) would consider a gift but unsure at time of survey. These two numbers mean 90% of the people will consider a gift to the campaign. This is a very positive response and bodes well for a capital campaign.
- Seventy-five (75%) of all church capital campaigns, with a three-year giving phase, have raised **one to one and one half of the annual** (non-designated) income in the past decade. First UMC should be within this financial range.
- Growing the endowment for capital needs should become a priority. The survey reveals 1 estate gift, 4 yes (consider) and 21 unsure. This challenge should be undertaken in the winter of 2026. New England United Methodist Foundation may assist with this need. We can also offer services.
- The church should continue exploring ways to secure alternative funds for ongoing needs such as rental of space, grants, co-existence with other congregations, and other creative means.
- If the Leadership Team decides to move forward with a capital campaign the case statement should be updated to reveal the steeple as the priority along with a plan to address the roof. Communication materials should be designed for the church and community. The steeple would be considered by the community.
- The church is in an excellent position for a successful capital campaign with a range of **$230,000 - $325,000** over three years. The community was not engaged in this study thus this projection is for the church campaign. To attain such will require prayer, work, and stretching of gifts. A response to the “call to sacrifice” must occur. The people of Rochester and those groups making grants will be asking “how much did the people of the church give (pledge)?” Once we have actual numbers a public community campaign could be launched.
- **A phased campaign vison goal should be considered which would state:**
  - ✧ When $250,000 is raised _____
  - ✧ When $400,000 is raised _____
  - ✧ When $500,000 is raised _____
  - ✧ When $800,000 is raised _____
  - ✧ When $ is raised could include the roof and other needs.

- **Keys to campaign success include:**
  - ✧ Prayer
  - ✧ Enlistment of campaign leadership
  - ✧ Increasing understanding and buy-in within and beyond the committed core
  - ✧ A strong belief from the leadership that this is the right next step
  - ✧ Producing clear, compelling communication
  - ✧ Raising enthusiasm for participation in the campaign
  - ✧ High-capacity givers engaging at higher levels
  - ✧ All parishioners engaging with sacrificial giving
  - ✧ Willingness to "ask" the community to give once the people of the church have made financial commitments.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

March 2025

- Leadership approval
- Campaign planning
- Leadership team identified
- Call to prayer by Pastor Ho-Soon

March/April 2025

- Leadership Team enlisted and trained (some of these filled by same person)
  - ✧ Campaign director(s)
  - ✧ Coordinator
  - ✧ Communication
  - ✧ Prayer
  - ✧ Children-youth
  - ✧ Gatherings (first commitment)
  - ✧ Celebration
  - ✧ Community director
  - ✧ Community lead gift
  - ✧ Community business
  - ✧ Grants
  - ✧ Community public phase
  - ✧ Reach (follow up team for 3 years)
- Prayer emphasis continues

May/June 2025

- Public phase
- Sunday themes of gratitude, prayer, faith, sacrifice, and vision
- Information gatherings

June 2025

- Church celebration and commitment month
- Community campaign launched

CONCLUSION

Thank you for allowing me this amazing privilege to share my calling and expertise with your church. First United Methodist Church is poised to emerge with greater vitality and growth. This campaign can be a foundation for deepening faith and reaching the next generation while upgrading the facilities. The church and community will have a celebration when the steeple is once again shining bright and standing tall in Rochester.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this report. It has been a genuine pleasure to serve you. I am excited about leading you into the future.

God bless First United Methodist Church,

Tom Melzoni PhD
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