Long Range Planning Committee Report

Part I
The Vision, Mission and Core Values Of Latham United Methodist Church

May 17, 2007
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The Committee’s Charge:

On November 13, 2005 the Charge Conference at Latham United Methodist Church voted to reconvene the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) to assess the latest long range plan and recommend an updated plan. This decision was made after a lengthy discussion regarding the purchase of and adjacent piece of property that had become available (the Margaret Davis home). The existing long range plan directed that these properties be purchased for future expansion as they became available.

Composition of 2006 Committee:

The LRPC was nominated by the Lay Leadership Committee and approved at the January 2006 meeting of the Board of Stewards. In addition to those on the LRPC by virtue of their leadership position, the Board of Stewards approved adding 3 members at large representing different age groups and tenures at Latham. The following members comprised the 2006 LRPC:

- Lay Leader: Jane Smith
- Senior Pastor: Hughey Reynolds
- Associate Pastor: John Hill
- Youth Director: Steve Elliott
- Music Director: Bill Hovik
- Director of Children’s & Adult Ministry: Susan Terry
- Board of Stewards Chair: Ken Stephens
- Council of Ministries Chair: Celia Seay
- Finance Chair: Lou Rau
- Trustee Chair: Jeff Langhout
- Staff Parish Chair: Buddy Bishop
- Education Chair: Jim Zimlich
- Stewardship Chair: Gerald Smith
- Missions Chair: Don Beaver
- Evangelism Chair: Tim Hastings
- Worship Chair: Judy Gillespie
- SpiritLink Coordinating: Chuck Simpson
- Member at Large: Amanda Clark
- Member at Large: Bonnie Tricoli
- Member at Large: Neal Porter
Previous Long Range Plans:

The first meeting of the LRPC was March 5, 2006. At this meeting, the committee found that the existing long range plan was approved in April 1990 with an updated version of unfinished projects to pursue printed in September 1997. These included 11 near-term projects and 8 long-term high cost projects. Many of the long-term projects were completed with the construction of the Family Life Center in 2001. The 1997 report is included as appendix 1 of this document. The committee discussed the need to revisit the basic question of why Latham exists and what values we are here to uphold as a first step to a long range plan.

Demographics, Vision, Mission and Values Study:

At the second meeting on April 2, 2006 the committee voted to divide our work into 1) a demographics sub-committee to help the church be aware of and respond to the rapidly changing demographics of our area and 2) a vision, mission and core values sub-committee to explore and help the church articulate why we exist and what core values guide us in our ministry. Buddy Bishop chaired the demographics study and Jim Zimlich the vision, mission and core values study.

The demographics data attained through Percept and other sources are summarized in the Demographics Study Results printed as appendix 2 of this report. The report forecasts significant growth in our area over the next 5 to 10 years.

Jim Zimlich proposed using a spiritual discernment model to ask and seek God’s vision and mission for our church and the core values that will guide us as we pursue that mission. Member of the LPRC and congregation were invited to participate in a weekly gathering for spiritual discernment facilitated by Traci Loveman. This model had been used in seeking new pastoral leadership in 2005 and gave important guidance to Latham’s SPRC in the appointive process that year. From May through August, the spiritual discernment group met on Sunday afternoons. A summary of their work and final report are included as appendix 3 of this report. The discernment group summary report was distributed both in Sunday bulletins and by email to those who prefer electronic communication from the church.
Invitations were extended to give feedback and to discuss the points with members of the discernment group and the LRPC.

**Congregational Feedback:**

The discernment group members were invited to a September 24 meeting of the LRPC. Plans were made to host a forum for church members to hear a presentation on the discernment group report, demographics and other ongoing projects from the previous long range plan. A Forum on Latham’s Future was held in the sanctuary on Sunday, November 5, 2006. Many excellent questions were raised and points clarified for the congregation and the LRPC. A summary of questions raised and points clarified at the forum is included as appendix 4 of this report.

The question for spiritual discernment was crucial in determining the outwardly focused direction of the vision and mission statements: “What are God’s plans for Huntsville and what is Latham’s role in fulfilling those plans?” Much attention was given in the discernment report to the need for ministries directed toward the homeless and Hispanic populations. A large number of the yet “un-reached” population in our community will include Hispanic and homeless people. Feedback from the congregation stressed that the “un-reached” in our immediate area include families who need a faith foundation and those broken by divorce.

A strong sense emerged from the demographics and vision, mission and core values that Latham’s call is to reach the un-reached of all national origins for Jesus Christ and His Church. Reaching those yet un-reached with God’s grace will require a wealth of spiritual resources to make us fit and to equip us for the task and to offer something of eternal value to others. Therefore the vision statement is needed that calls us to the source of our faith, hope and love, Jesus Christ, to receive from him, make him known to others and to be transformed in His image.
Composition of 2007 Committee:

On January 7, 2007 the LRPC reconvened. Both the 2006 members who had rotated out of their leadership positions and the 2007 members who had assumed those responsibilities were invited. (Neal Porter was removed from the LRPC at his request.) The 2007 LRPC Membership of the consisted of:

- Lay Leader: Jack Hagler
- Senior Pastor: Hughey Reynolds
- Associate Pastor: John Hill
- Youth Director: Steve Elliott
- Music Director: (vacant)
- Director of Children’s & Adult Ministry: Susan Terry
- Board of Stewards Chair: Ken Stephens
- Council of Ministries Chair: Jackie Langhout
- Finance Chair: Don Bowden
- Trustees Chair: Jeff Langhout
- Staff Parish Chair: Gerald Smith
- Education Chair: Jane Smith
- Stewardship Chair: Lou Rau
- Missions Chair: Don Beaver
- Evangelism: Tim Hastings
- Worship Chair: Judy Gillespie
- SpiritLink Coordinating: Chuck Simpson
- Member at Large: Amanda Clark
- Member at Large: Bonnie Tricoli

Vision, Mission and Core Values Statements Drafted:

The January 7, 2007 meeting convened to draft a vision statement, mission statement and a set of core values for Latham. After much helpful discussion and study, the group again divided into 2 drafting groups to draft a vision/mission statement and to draft core values. Jack Hagler chaired the vision/mission group and Ken Stephens the core values group. These sub-groups studied scripture, the discernment group’s work and statements published by a variety of churches before the February meeting. On February 3, 2007 the LRPC heard reports from the sub-committees, reviewed and refined their statements. The LRPC requested that these statements and core values be publicized on http://www.lathamumc.org and through
the newsletter and that feedback again be sought from the congregation regarding these statements.

The LRPC reconvened on March 27, 2007 to review the feedback and refine the statements. The LRPC voted unanimously to propose to the May 17, 2007 Board of Stewards meeting that the following statements become the vision statement, mission statement and core values of Latham United Methodist Church:

**VISION STATEMENT:**

*LATHAM EXISTS TO HEAR CHRIST, TO PROCLAIM CHRIST AND TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST TO THE WORLD.*

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

*THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD, LATHAM FOCUSES OUR MINISTRIES AND WORSHIP TO REACH THE UN-REACHED AND TO GROW AND EMPOWER DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST.*

**CORE VALUES:**

We believe in...

1. **The Body of Christ.** The Church is the body of Christ and every member has a special and unique function. (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4)

2. **Worship.** We glorify God through worship. (1 Chronicles 16:28-36; Matthew 4:10; John 4:24; Ephesians 5:18-20)

3. **Stewardship.** The stewardship of our time, talents and resources is a vital element in our spiritual growth. (Mark 12:43-44; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 8)

4. **Prayer.** Prayer is a means of Grace through which we grow in a personal relationship with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. (Psalm 50:15; Matthew 6:9; Romans 8:26)

5. **God’s Love.** We are called as servants to express God’s love for all people. (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:44; Romans 13:8)

6. **Ecumenical Community.** We are called to work in cooperation with other faith communities to meet human need. (Mark 9:40; Ephesians 2:14)
7. **Integrity.** We strive for integrity in seeking to do God’s will in all situations. (1 Chronicles 29:17; Proverbs 10:9; Titus 2:6-8)

8. **Christian Discipleship.** Biblically-based studies, fellowship and service help us grow in our Christian discipleship. (Matthew 10:1; John 13:35; Matthew 28:19-20)

God’s Vision, Mission and Values Transform the Church:

The work areas, committees and organizations of Latham United Methodist Church are charged to take these statements, assess their ministries in light of them, and decide what they are going to do differently in light of this vision and mission and these values. We ask each group to answer 3 questions:

1. What existing ministries will you refocus in order to carry out this vision and mission?
2. What new ministries will you develop during the next 3 to 5 years to fulfill this vision and mission?
3. What existing ministries that do not fulfill this vision and mission will you phase out during the next 3-5 years?

Part I of the Long Range Planning Committee report consisting of the mission statement, vision statement and core values of Latham will be presented to the May 17, 2007 meeting of the Board of Stewards for adoption. The LRPC will gather the plans of the work areas, committees and organizations and prioritize and coordinate the plans. These will be presented at the September 2007 meeting of the Board of Stewards for discussion and adoption as the long range plan for Latham.
Appendix 1
(Previous Long Range Plan)
Report to the Administrative Board

September 28, 1997

The Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) has met six times this year. At the first meeting of the committee on May 20, 1997, it was decided that the various committees and work areas of the Council of Ministries (COM), other committees of the church, i.e., Trustees, Finance, Staff Parish, etc., and other groups such as United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women and the Elderberries would be asked to make input to the LRPC regarding facilities, staff, and program necessary to do ministry for our church and our community.

Inputs were received at the July 22 meeting and refined at the August 12 meeting. Where the same input comes from more than one committee, it has been listed only once. Some inputs are things that can be accomplished in the near term and with little cost, while some fit more into the long-term category.

Items that are considered near term and/or low- or moderate-cost include:
1. Recording of members’ blood type in record
2. Additional Bible Study groups
3. Landscaping the Weatherly Road side of church.
4. Improved Narthex lighting.
5. Sign with the hours of services.
6. Replace Sanctuary carpet.
7. Commercial dishwasher for the kitchen.
8. Fellowship Hall sound system.
10. Acquire new robes for the Chancel and Witness Choirs.

Items that are considered long-term and/or high-cost include:
1) Replacing the Ford van—ideally with a 20-40 passenger van.
2) More Sunday School rooms. Discussion included multiple Sunday School times. Begin one new Sunday School class a year for the next five years.
3) Improvements to Sanctuary.
   a. Welcome lobby
   b. Upgrade sound system
   c. Add restrooms
   d. Enclose passageways to the Sanctuary
   e. Elevator to balcony
   f. Grand piano
   g. New organ

4) Family life Center Facility (multipurpose building, etc.)
   a. Basketball court
   b. Walking track
   c. Children’s play area
   d. Adult exercise area with showers
   e. Stage
5) Music Suite Facility
   a. Practice room(s) for choirs and handbells
   b. Storage for choir robes, music, handbells
   c. Office and computer space for choir director(s)

6) Secure and efficient office facilities
   a. Office space for church secretary, administrator, senior pastor, associate pastor, Christian education worker, and possible other staff
   b. Separate room for office machines (copies, fax, etc.)
   c. Restrooms readily accessible from the Sanctuary
   d. Conference room with small kitchen
   e. Ladies’ parlor suitable for use by brides and entertainment of visitors

7) Staffing
   a. Full-time business manager
   b. Full-time children’s minister
   c. More janitorial help
   d. Family Life Center staff

8) Plan for acquisition of property around the church.

The facilities might be accomplished in one building or perhaps two buildings. This would be determined by the Trustees in consultation with architects and builders as to location and size.

The above plan would free up rooms for Sunday School classes and provide the church with facilities to met the needs of our church and community for many years to come.

It is recommended that the Administrative Board task the appropriate committees to study this plan and report back to the Board recommended solutions by May 1998. Report shall include estimated cost and schedule.

Recommended to the Administrative Board – September 28, 1997
Long Range Planning Committee

Sean Williamson    Jackie Langhout
Roy Willis         Jeff Langhout
Gary Ward          Judy Gillespie
Mark Puckett       Jim Freyder
Beth Nix           Kate Daniel
Ginny Bentley      Buddy Bishop
Jack Matheney, chairman    Harvey Beck
Demographics Study Results
By Buddy Bishop, 30 Oct 2006

- Composite Demographic results based upon Census data with a 10 mile radius around Latham, made up largely of Zip Codes 35801, 35802, and 35803.
  - Since year 2000, population has increased by 9400 persons (5%) with current population at 211,000.
  - By 2010, the number of households is projected to increase by 6300 (7%)
    - Mainly composed of “rising potential professionals” with incomes of $50K-$75K per year.
    - Ethnic diversity projected to be “extremely high” composed of Black/Afro Americans currently at 25%. Asians will be fastest growing ethnic group now (2005 data) at 5.4% of the population expects to see a 26% growth rate, followed by Hispanics, now at 2.4% increasing by 3% over current levels.
  - Population by age group:
    - 35-44 highest bracket
    - followed by 45-54
    - then 25-34
  - Educational level projected to be 51% above national average with 41% above national average for postgraduate/Professional degrees.

- Home construction within 3 miles of Latham:
  - 16 single family home developments are springing up or planned for Latham service area. This is projected to involve 250 to 350 homes within 3 mile radius of Latham. Source: HSV Times 30 April, 2006, Houses/Schools Insert.

- Base Re-Alignment and Closure Commission decisions expected to bring 2500-5000 jobs to Huntsville and surrounding area. Greatest source of potential influx of people.

Bottom line: Latham Service area can be expected to see significant increase in population, mostly highly paid/professional/college graduates. The area can also be expected to see significant ethnic diversity, primarily from Asians (Taiwan, China, South Korea, India), followed by Hispanic backgrounds.

References: Percept data from NA Conference UMC, Census Data, data obtained from Huntsville City Planning Dept, and special edition of Huntsville Times newspaper concerning BRAC impacts to city.
Appendix 3

A Summary of the Findings of Latham’s Discernment Group

A group from Latham has been involved in a process of prayer, listening, and scripture reading to seek direction for Latham’s future. This process began with the selection of a question to which we would be seeking to discern the answer.

The Question: What is God's plan for our community, and what is God's planned role for Latham to help achieve that vision?

Discussion: The group discussed our need to know what God's plan is before we can know our part in it. Through our process of prayer, we have discerned that God's plan is:

“To draw together a global community in Huntsville, AL where meaningful work, relevant faith, mutual love and concrete hope flourish and are extended to all. God’s plan for Latham in fulfilling that vision is to offer and represent Jesus Christ as a bridge from isolation to belonging, linking those on the fringes of our community with God and God’s resources, utilizing several different contact ministries”.

God’s plan for Latham to achieve that vision:

1. "Helping the Homeless" – Jesus called us to feed His sheep and to take care of the least of these. We feel that Latham is called to share Jesus' love with those on the fringes of society. We can do that in the following ways:
   - Have gift bags to either distribute to the homeless or have available for church members to give to homeless people they encounter. These bags would contain items such as antibiotic ointment, a gift card to a fast food restaurant, a card listing helpful resource numbers, a phone card, etc.
   - Support community efforts to restart IHN, with the possibility of using the Davis home as housing.
   - Providing transportation to the free clinic/ raising funds (e.g. Hands of Christ, etc.) for health care, e.g. surgery, not provided at the free clinic.

2. “Disenfranchised Worshipers” – Through the discernment process we feel God is calling Latham to either provide or coordinate worship services for those in our community who may not be able to worship at our normal worship times or be able to understand our present worship services.
   - Mid-week service – One of the groups that doesn’t have an opportunity for what we consider “normal" Sunday morning worship is the group of individuals that have to work on Sunday morning. Those in the service industry, retail, construction, etc. We feel that Latham is being called to start a mid-week service in order to minister to these people.
   - Many in our community do not speak English. According to demographic studies, half of Southeast Huntsville will be Spanish-speaking by 2012. We feel called to offer our building for a Protestant Spanish-speaking service.
3. “Building the global community”— We are hampered in ministry by only speaking one language. Therefore to bridge the gap in communication in the growing global community of Huntsville, we are called to reach out and minister to the members of other cultures.
   • We would begin to either offer Spanish classes at Latham, or provide transportation to Spanish classes elsewhere.
   • Latham has an ongoing relationship with the people of Chacraseca, Nicaragua. We seek to continue and strengthen that relationship.
   • We would offer ESL classes for the community, or partner with others who already offer these classes. This would not only be for Spanish speakers, but for anyone seeking to learn English.

4. “Future Ministry Priorities”
   • supporting UM Foster Care programs
   • reaching out to children from AIM
   • beginning a young men’s mentoring program
   • Single Parent Care Team
   • Adult Day Care (coordinate with/ support Trinity UMC)
   • disaster shelter
   • more intergenerational activities
   • celebrating marriages
   • improved communication (both in-church and letting folks know that many of these services are available in our community already).
Appendix 4

Concerns and Responses from the November 5, 2006 Open Forum:

Concern: The emphasis on Hispanic Ministries is not called for by the demographics.

Response: The Hispanic population is expected to multiply in Huntsville in the next 5 to 10 years. The Anglo population will grow more in numbers, though at a much smaller percentage. The Hispanic focus in the discernment document was influenced in part Latham’s special relationship with Chacraseca, Nicaragua. Several group members have been or were soon going on the annual mission trip to Chacraseca (2003-2007 thus far). Awareness of Spanish speaking people in our midst was heightened by several of us feeling what it was like to try to survive and work in a country where we do not know the language. Several participants in the discernment group either work or volunteer with indigent groups who live on the edge of homelessness. Their/our experience brought the homeless more centrally into view in our discernment process.

Concern and Response: It is not just the Hispanic and Homeless population who are isolated in our community. There are members of Latham with real passion for ministry for hurting people who are all around us.

Concern: Why should we limit our ministry on people on the fringes when there are so many in the middle who have not been reached?

Response: The phrase “limit our efforts to the fringes” is one I would like to replace with the phrase “focus our efforts.” The reason for having a mission statement is to prevent an organization from focusing on self-preservation and to focus outwardly instead. Jesus’ statement that he came not to be served but to serve, and to give himself as a ransom for many is the motive for focusing on the fringes. I want people in the center (that includes us) to rally together to reach people on the fringes with the Good News of God’s love in Christ.

Concern: For us to reach out to those on the fringes, we have to seek God’s resources to fill the emptiness and heal the hurts we have. One member used this analogy to make her point: An airline attendant before a flight takes off tells passengers that in the event of a loss in air pressure in the aircraft, oxygen masks will drop down in front of each passenger. The adult is to place the oxygen mask on himself/herself before placing the oxygen mask on the child.

Response: We will continue to provide the ministries that teach, preach and practice the Gospel for the members of the church and we will invite those not on the fringes to learn, serve and grow with us in order that together we might more effectively reach more people who are on the fringes with that Gospel.
(Appendix 4 continued)

Concern: What about people on the fringes who are in our church or very close around us, like struggling families and those broken by divorce? Is Latham not called to reach out to them?

Response: We are finding that several in our church have a heart for families impacted by divorce. There are many in our church and more outside our church who are facing the pain caused by a divorce right now. We see some of them regularly. We could help provide preventive measures and to make good marriages better and give marriages in trouble hope and resources for growing healthy. If divorced individuals and their families became a mission focus at Latham, our goal would not be to seek out primarily divorced people to be a part of our church. (We could expect more divorced people to become more active in the church as the Gospel we practice in relation to their needs moves them from the fringes toward the center of the community.) A lot of struggling couples would greatly benefit from having mentor couples whose marriages have survived ups and downs to work with them. We would remain a full service church with a specialty for which we become widely known in the community.

Concern: What are the boundaries of our “community”?

Response: We no longer have “parishes” that serve as church “zones” and Latham is no longer, if it ever was, a neighborhood church. Church consultant Kennon Callahan defines a church’s community as everything and everyone within the average commute members make to work, shop and to eat out and drive for entertainment.
Endnotes

1. (From page 4) A copy of the 1990 Long Range Planning Data and recommendations may be viewed in the church library. Dr. Mike Lowe, Reverend Ernie Peck and Rev. Bobby Alford authored that report along with other LRPC members.

2. (From page 4) Among other authors who urge churches to be clear on the vision, mission and core values is Tom Bandy in *Moving Off the Map, Growing Spiritual Redwoods* and *Christian Chaos*.

3. (From page 4) Percept is a source for Ministry Area Profiles. They are prepared specifically for the location of the organization that has a contract with Percept for the data. Data sources of the Percept Group, Inc. include Percept, Caritas, US Census Bureau. The contact number for Percept is 1-800-442-6277.

4. (From page 4) The Spiritual Discernment model used by the Discernment Group is found in Danny E. Morris and Charles M. Olsen’s book, *Discerning God’s Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997). This process was used in 2005 in a class led by former pastor Dan Kitchens to give input the Staff Parish Relations Committee on the profile for ministerial leadership to seek for Latham.

5. (From page 6) The Great Commission given by Jesus to his disciples is stated in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” *The Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church states, “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs” (¶120). The vision of the North Alabama Conference is to “challenge and equip local churches to grow more disciples of Jesus Christ by taking risks and changing lives.”

6. (From page 7) The LRPC seeks in this vision statement to name how we can perfectly know, share with others and live out the will of God by hearing Christ, proclaiming Christ and becoming like Christ to the world. The committee wrestled most with the last phrase and seriously considered “become Christ,” “embody Christ” and “serve Christ” before deciding “become like Christ” was true to the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification.

7. (From page 7) Latham teaches that disciples of Jesus Christ grow by God’s grace through participation in 1) corporate Worship plus 2) weekly involvement in a growth group for study, prayer and accountability plus 3) participation in a service group for giving and sharing talents, time and resources to assist others.

8. (From page 7) Disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit through prayer. As disciples of Jesus, we are invited into life of disciplined individual, small group and corporate prayer. We seek fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit
and encounters with the living God. God empowers His people for His mission.

9. (From page 8) Part 2 of Latham’s Long Range Plan will consist of the action plans of Latham’s work areas, committees and organizations that are developed to specifically carry out the vision, mission and core values adopted by Latham’s Board of Stewards. Part 2 of the LRP is a 3-5 year plan of action in the form of SMART Goals (strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic and on a timetable). These goals are to be reviewed annually by the LRPC. The vision, mission and core values are the heart and soul of the church that remain constant over time. They may be refined through the years as the church gains clarity regarding God’s vision and mission. The ministries developed to carry out the mission, vision and values change as demographics of the area evolve and the spiritual gifts of members God sends to Latham grow.