

A Vision of LaSalle Street Church 2010 and Beyond

Over the last six months, our Elder Board has been on a journey to discern and articulate a three to five year vision for our church. We love God and we love this community. We want LaSalle Street Church to thrive, both for God's glory, and for the lives of our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Our Future

As a congregation, we have already committed to throwing wide open our doors, so that all may come, wherever they are spiritually. Now that the doors are open, what do we do next? **Everyone who walks through our doors must find a seat at the table. Everyone must be spiritually fed.**

Our mission calls us to authenticity in our worship, our relationships, and our service. We cannot be authentic without a sense of belonging, without meeting people where they are. Throwing open the doors is only the first step. The next step requires that we create a place where people will stay, not for the sake of the church, but for their own sake.

Growth

Every week, 275 people walk through our sanctuary doors. Over the last five years, church attendance has increased by one-third. How should we respond to that growth? In John 21, Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Most of us would answer just like Peter did, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus then commands us: **Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs.** Our response to God's love is to feed the people walking through our doors.

Nourishing the spiritual needs of a range of believers is challenging. During this post-Easter season, Pastor Laura Truax has talked about one of our biggest challenges to meeting people where they are, which is to change the operating models that have held true at LaSalle for many years:

- From assuming the faith to spiritual formation
- From givers to receivers who give
- From democracy to discernment
- From scarcity to abundance
- From fellowship to hospitality

These are not just catchy phrases; these are biblical paradigms that we must practice if we are to nourish all who walk through our doors.

Leadership

Spiritual growth doesn't just happen by sitting in the pew. Spiritual growth happens because we as individuals are open to the Spirit, and because we are in an environment where growth is safe and nurtured.

Though the size of our congregation has grown by a third, we have not commensurately grown our leadership. In addition to comprising nearly 300 people, our church oversees six ministries, owns a community center where 1,000 people walk through weekly, and directly manages operating budgets totaling over \$2 million. And we do it with a full-time staff of five people.

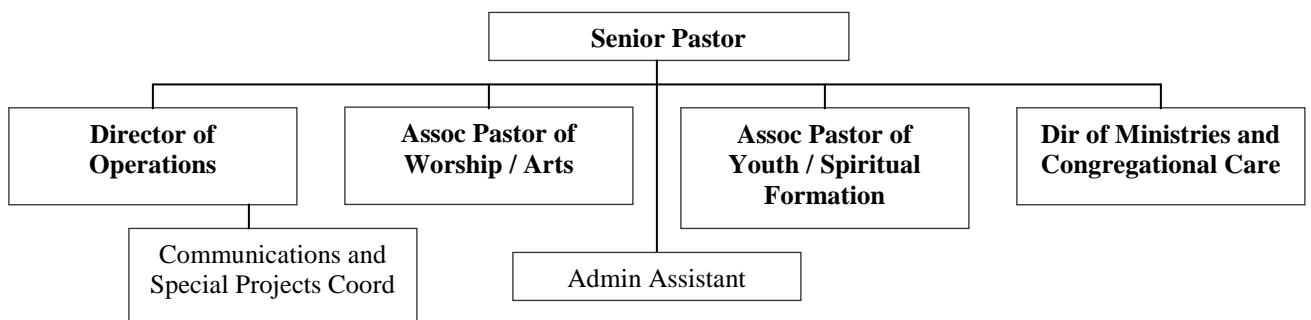
Over the past few years, as our church has grown, along with the accompanying needs of our congregants, we have added human resources in “patches,” trying to add part-time staff here and there to fill gaps.

The patches are fraying, and we need to respond, not just for the health of our staff, but also for the health of our church. God has called us to be stewards of the gifts he has given. Every week, we have 275 souls entrusted to us, and if we cannot respond to their needs, we need to be out of the church business. Right now, we cannot respond fully to those needs. Yes, we have a wonderful staff. Yes, we have incredibly talented lay leadership. But no, a full-time staff of five simply cannot meet the needs of 275 spiritually hungry people, in addition to dealing with the added demands of a community center and the need to help support various ministries in different ways.

Staff Structure

In January, two separate efforts helped us redefine the church’s staffing model. Kathryn Scanland, an organizational expert, and the Structure Task Force (Stewart Clarke, Marge Chesney, and Anne Nelson) both submitted reports that clarified the structural impediments to reaching our vision. We recognized that we had to overcome both program and process challenges to be able to meet the needs of our congregation.

The result of our conversations was the creation of a staff structure where the Senior Pastor oversees and is supported by a small Leadership Team. This Leadership Team, in turn, facilitates all programming by participating in and/or leading all lay committees. A Communications and Special Projects Coordinator handles integrated administrative and communication needs for the entire Leadership Team. A simplified version of this organizational chart appears below.



Note: **bold** type denotes member of Leadership Team

To meet our church’s program needs, we added two positions to the staff structure: the Associate Pastor of Youth / Spiritual Formation, and the Communications and Special Projects Coordinator. If we are serious about meeting people where they are spiritually,

we have to provide vehicles for growth at every stage of faith. No one on our current staff can focus on that critical foundation of our vision. We strongly believe that one person should provide the leadership and hold the accountability for spiritual formation programming that spans the faith journeys of our congregants.

As you will read in Pastor Truax's attached response to questions from the congregational meeting, the need for a Communications and Special Projects Coordinator is glaring. Not only do critical pieces of information fall through the cracks, we are missing terrific opportunities to open our doors even wider to our neighbors and others seeking a connection to something bigger than our culture.

We also expanded the Director of Ministries and Congregational Care position, which previously was funded to the level of 10 hours per week for small group ministry. This position will be funded half by the church, and half by Breaking Bread. Through this congregational care function, we help people find a seat at the table.

The program changes are critical, but so too are the process changes inherent in the structure above. The changes are summarized below.

Process Goal

- Increased staff availability, accessibility
- Empowered and integrated staff leadership
- Effective support for lay leadership
- Clear accountability

Resulting Staff Change

- More full-time, fewer part-time positions
- Leadership team structure, with Sr. Pastor having fewer direct reports
- Staff involvement with all program-related committees
- Programming overseen by leadership team

Resources

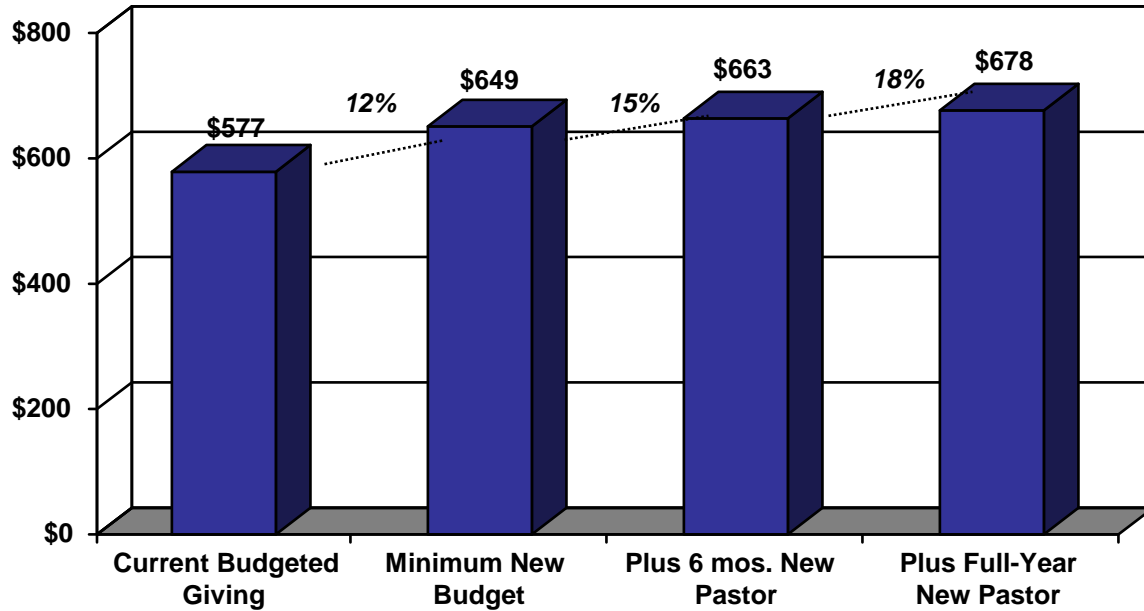
We present this new staff structure as a destination. At our congregational meeting on May 6, we shared alternative paths to reaching this destination. Hiring a Communications and Special Projects Coordinator is an investment we must make now. This consolidation of part-time positions will create a new net expense of about \$35,000. Making the Director of Ministries and Congregational Care full time adds another \$18,000. Along with other expense increases that are unavoidable (rent) or strategic (communications materials), we are proposing a minimum increase in giving of 12% over the current year's budget. *[See second bar on the graph below.]*

Some of you have asked how actual giving has been this fiscal year. Year-to-date giving is \$25,000 higher than it was last year at this time. Using actual giving data from the end of April, and adding actual May and June giving from 2006, we can estimate that we will end this fiscal year on June 30 with contributions of \$602,000. **The difference between the proposed giving level of \$649,000 and projected actual giving for the current year is less than 8%.**

The budget we are proposing includes a part-time Youth Director, not a full-time new Associate Pastor of Youth and Spiritual Formation. The next step toward our destination

would be to hire that new Associate Pastor; this addition would increase giving needs by another \$29,000, or 13% over projected giving for this year. Delaying that hire until January 1, 2008 would reduce the giving need to \$14,000, or a 10% increase.

The chart below shows the path to our destination. We hope you agree on what we believe God is calling us to become. Together, we must decide how we get there.



Faith

As we said at the congregational meeting, we acknowledge that some of us simply are not in a position to increase our giving. We honor those of you who have already given abundantly and sacrificially to the church, her ministries, and the capital campaign.

Some of us, on the other hand, can provide more financial support. Some of us have been hungering for the kind of spiritual vibrancy that we glimpse in this vision, and we will find ways to align our pocketbooks with our hearts.

If you feel called to this church and this picture of LaSalle's future, then we encourage your participation. We thank God and the Spirit for the work that has been done in our hearts as Elders. We pray fervently that our decisions and actions concur with God's purposes for LaSalle Street Church.

Many good and thought-provoking questions were raised at our May 6 meeting. Pastor Laura Truax's response to those questions appears below. We ask for you to read through her responses in detail, as we prepare for our June 3 congregational meeting where we will affirm this vision and vote on a budget.

In Christ,
The Elder Board of LaSalle Street Church

**Pastor Truax Responds to Questions from the
May 6 Congregational Meeting**

Are we growing, where is it coming from, and how will growth change LaSalle Street Church?

Growth certainly means change. And change, for many of us, is associated with loss first and only secondarily with new life. Here are some of our overall numbers from the last few years. (And a special thank you to those ushers who have been faithfully counting!)

Since 2003, our numbers have steadily and consistently grown. Our growth has been measured and reasonable – absorbable one could say. Look at the following numbers based on our weekly attendance records:

<u>Year</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>
Weekly Average	208	219	238	254	275
Growth vs. prior year		5%	9%	7%	8%

Cumulative Growth 2003-2007: **32%**

As a reminder, we were concerned about whether we would have the appropriate growth to hire Gary Rand as a full-time pastor of worship and the arts. Gary came on staff in September 2005 and as you can see, his new position paid for itself! This is consistent with what the elder board and I have been learning through our resources. Adding staff that is directly involved in programming pays for itself – generally in the first year.

Back to growth: It’s hard for me to answer this very dispassionately. We grow or we die.

Yes, I really do believe it is that stark. This is the mission of the church: To make disciples! To care for the orphans and widows! To proclaim the Good News! It’s hard to imagine that those activities won’t result in growth. In absence of major conflict, or severe distress of some kind, I would say that the normal, God-ordained trajectory for the church is one of growth. **If the church isn’t offering something so life-giving and God-honoring that you want to invite your friends to it – and thereby run the risk of growth – then I think we should seriously consider locking our doors.**

I pray almost every day that God will send lonely people, struggling people, lost people, to our doors. I pray they will come to a discussion group, wander into Cornerstone Café, hesitantly come into worship some Sunday morning. I never, ever, question whether growth is a good thing because I believe it is foundational to the mission of the church. I do question our ability to meet the needs God brings to us. The Spirit is bringing people into our midst – it seems our responsibility is to meet those needs. And if we fail to meet those needs, then I believe we should pray faithfully that those needs are being met through another church. We consistently hear from people who say they were afraid they would never be able to find a church home only to discover that LSC was the right place

for them. I pray that after they find us, we can in fact offer them the sort of home all of us who are already here desire as well.

Although we don't keep detailed demographics, most of our growth is coming from people in their 20s and 30s – many from our immediate neighborhood and some from around the city. **To reiterate, we have been consistently growing at a rate of between 7% and 9% every year since 2005.**

Why the Pastor of Spiritual Formation? How does it differ from Oreon's work?

Oreon operates as the front door of the church. She is the connector person – the one who can get people plugged in mid-level and smaller connection points – i.e. small groups, zip code parties, table talk, etc. As Oreon gets more systems in place, I imagine her taking on a greater role in training small group leaders, offering support and companionship to them as she initiates other small groups as well. Training small group leadership is one way of honoring the LaSalle tradition of lay leadership. Oreon's efforts can be multiplied through effective training of new lay leaders.

The Pastor of Spiritual Formation is different. We would really benefit by having a person coordinate our various educational offerings, bring some overall direction and focus to adult/youth and children's programming and curriculum. As an independent church reflecting a wide range of ecclesiastical understandings and theological positions, we are in a more needy position than most for someone to coordinate our various offerings. When long-time LaSallers express concern over growth, I think what they are getting at in part, is the understandable concern that there may be such an emphasis on new people that those of us who have been here a while are left behind. The Pastor of Spiritual Formation would be the person who would coordinate and lead many of the programs that I imagine long-time LaSallers really getting excited about.

Candidly, I am hoping this position would be filled by a man who could coordinate men's ministry and provide pastoral support. This person would be charged with activities like recruiting Disciple leaders, running a weekly Bible class, noon lunch groups and overseeing the coordination and support for all Sunday morning programs. This person would supply a male presence in the pulpit and could provide more pastoral care – particularly about sensitive issues in which men would prefer to consult with men. Pastor Gary has been faithful about carrying our pastoral care to those involved in worship and the arts. This would extend that care.

And why is Spiritual Formation connected with a part-time youth position?

The second part is simple- I don't think our youth are well served by having a revolving door of faces in leadership. I am sad that my son has had three youth directors over the last three years. I would like to stop that door from spinning - but the reality is that 1) youth pastors have short life spans (3 years is average) and 2) part-time youth pastors have even shorter life spans.

I have tried to get support for a combined young life/youth pastor position, but that has been on hold for the past year. In part because we don't know if we want to be a church

that is evangelizing at the high school across the street and in part, because this search is in the hands of the local Young Life Director who has a lot going on as well. I think we will continue to have a frustrating experience with our youth pastor until we make that position more “weighty”: i.e. offer a meaningful salary, benefits, etc.

Do I think these two jobs are incompatible? No – but I agree with the various comments that it will be difficult to get the right mix of skills and competencies. (It’s also a strongly relational job so that’s another thing to consider.) Difficult but not impossible. I think a person of some depth in their 30s or 40s with a youth background who has also continued to grow and develop spiritually; thoughtful and intentional in their mental and emotional development, and engaging relationally would be the sort of person we hope to find. That shouldn’t be too hard – LaSalle is blessed to be full of those people! Really, though, we would look for that person, but always with the recognition that we may need to adjust and redistribute things as the right person is identified.

Why do we need a full-time person focused on communication?

I know that a full-time communication person can seem like a luxury, but communication is one of the primary tasks. In the last few years, we’ve had a couple of different people try to do this job as a half-time – typically by squeezing in other responsibilities. Ruth Harder was the last example of this. It was frustrating and endless and was one reason why she burned out within 7 months. This position is now served by Matt Sadler working 10 – 15 hours a week, Joy Miller working five or so hours as creative director, and Jeremiah Martin working 10 hours a week on web support only.

There’s a lot of leaking holes - let me give you a couple of examples from just the past few days so you’ll have a sense of what’s going on:

- **General communication between LSC and ministries and tenants.** In our ministry director’s meeting this week, one Executive Director expressed frustration that they didn’t know Lois was going to be out for the month. Hum. It seems like the office staff knew it, but we failed to communicate it to anyone else in the building. This followed on the heels of a conversation where the Ministry Directors got the email that the submissions for our annual report were due the next week. Again, some of us knew about the report and had assigned each other the task of calling people with the deadline, but things came up and not all the calls were made. It wasn’t on the top of any one of our lists. Still another concern was the conflict between the LSC women’s retreat and a ministry’s annual fundraiser. It could have been a simple thing – but wasn’t. No one was communicating the big picture with the big calendar to anyone across the organization of the LaSalle family.
- **General programming communication.** We need someone not only to follow up with communicating all forms of news and events to our tenants and ministries; we need someone to communicate ongoing activities in our church and in the community. We are already doing so many wonderful programs that just publicizing them as doorways where newcomers and the community could get involved would be a big step toward integrating newer people.

Here are a few examples:

- The **Monday night Bible study group**. After writing up my initial text for that, I have not had a chance to adjust it. Ongoing, changing lens toward what we are studying and exploring would be helpful and enticing.
 - **Cornerstone Café**. We have great posters – they don't actually get posted anywhere other than our elevator bank. Cornerstone Café is a very non-threatening threshold for people to cross. Advertising it is a way of not doing new work, but maximizing the outreach of what we are already doing.
 - **Monthly book group**. If you miss it in the bulletin, then you've missed it. There's nothing going out to the broader community even though book groups continue to be one of our cultural phenomena.
 - **Sunday Morning Programming**. There are so many ways of communicating our services and educational offerings but we are only able to reliably communicate through the worship bulletin and monthly Life+Times. What about spotlighting special programming in our neighborhood? Having regularly rotating banners on LaSalle Street and Wells Street? What about reaching out to the new home buyers in our area and communicating with the parents from the children's learning center? *Maybe many of you have asked these questions. I know I have asked them. A lot. But the answer is always the same: we don't have anyone who can do it.*
- **Update and further develop the LSC website**. The fertile ground of our website is largely untilled. Jeremiah Martin has built and maintains the “architecture” of our site. He also posts the information that someone sends him – in exactly the same form in which it was sent. This means that the tone and ethos of our information and writing varies. Some of it is good, some is great, and other pieces make you wince. We have asked volunteers to write about their various areas, and not surprisingly some people write volumes, others write little to nothing. A quick visit to our website should give you a good sense of what we're talking about.
www.lasallestreetchurch.org This communications person would be charged with writing, updating, deleting, uploading service CD's and podcasting. They would be responsible with the overall tone and all communications back and forth with Jeremiah. I would imagine that Jeremiah's time would be reduced as he would be primarily on retainer for software design changes. (I have already discussed this with Jeremiah).

When Kathryn Scanland, elder and co-owner of Greystone Consultants did an analysis of our office and staff last December, her first recommendation was “Hire a full-time communications director.” A full-time position will be about \$35,000 year including benefits.

Is this communications person for maintenance or will it facilitate growth?

I believe that this position and the proposed pastoral position are simply to address the needs of growth that are already happening. Some of us remember the days of Kim Zimmerman – this is largely a return to where we were on a support staff basis to several

years ago. However, because we are broadening the description and we are seeking someone who is savvy on a number of communication fronts, I fully expect this person to enhance our programming visibility and therefore assist in any growth God may have for us.

This position differs from Sharon Williams' job on several fronts. Sharon is a key administrative person who keeps staff schedules, reserves building needs, handles congregational needs and inquiries, updates records, answers phones, and performs all secretarial duties for pretty much every body in the office. She is not a letter writer, web master, poster maker, worship bulletin creator, and the other tasks identified with a full-time communications position.

What's the timeline of increasing staff needed to accommodate new people?

We would like to hire both new people today but realize that we need to balance good stewardship with the desire to meet the demands of a growing church. We will hire new staff when we're confident that we have the right level of giving to meet our financial commitments.

What would leadership do if the vision doesn't unfold because the congregation doesn't support the budget?

We will keep doing what we are doing.