

The Larchmont Avenue Church

Mission Study



Prepared by The Mission Study Committee:
Co-Chairs, Arthur Washington & Wes Huang, Robert Chambers, Alyssa Beaver Gomez,
Anthony Manson, Sheila Kindig and Stephanie Piccone



60 Forest Park Avenue Larchmont, New York 10538
(914)834-1800 • www.lacny.org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We have undertaken this Mission Study in preparation for calling a new senior pastor. Our previous senior pastor retired in August 2018 after serving for 19 years. In November 2018, we called our current Interim Pastor.

The Mission Study Committee's process comprised three main phases: information-gathering, analysis, and writing, an effort that was undertaken over 11 months (from early March 2019 through the end of January 2020).

Information was gathered in three ways:

- First, a congregational survey was conducted by an experienced outside agent, Holy Cow. The Committee took advantage of the opportunity provided by Holy Cow's program to customize certain survey areas and questions, to better address issues we discerned to be of particular interest to our church. The response to the survey was strong: 155 members completed it, or some 117% of average weekly attendance.
- Our second step in gathering information was to conduct 'focus groups' or small-group conversations with church members to help flesh out, albeit anecdotally, areas of interest highlighted by the survey results. All told, some 60 members participated in ten focus groups held over a three-month period. These sessions gave members of the congregation a largely unstructured opportunity to voice their joys, concerns and goals.
- The third step of information-gathering was to interview key players in our church and community, including current pastoral staff, the town supervisor and village mayor, school officials and others. This helped us gain insight into how our church is viewed in our community, what the community's needs are and what its future needs will be, and how our church staff functions.

After gathering information by these methods, the Committee turned to the next phase: analyzing it. Each member approached this task in her or his own way. Overall the tools we used included, in no particular order: review of the assembled data and information; discussion; prayer; exchange of comments; and reference back to first principles.

The third major phase was to write this Report. Drafts, revisions and additions were proposed freely, discussed and considered. This Mission Study Report is very much a collective effort and we all have faith that we have been guided by a greater wisdom, either among us or outside us.

MISSION STATEMENT

We have revised our **mission statement** as follows:

As a community of faith of all ages, we gather to witness God's love and grace through worship, service and education. We seek inspiration to more effectively serve as disciples of Christ. In a challenging world, we strive to nurture each other and our neighbors by providing a safe haven where both joys and burdens can be shared. All are welcome here.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Vision: Our Purposes as a People of God

Throughout this process we have discerned a longing for deeper connections with God, with one another, and with our surrounding community. Our vision for Larchmont Avenue Church is to grow in vitality by focusing on four core areas:

1) Deeper Connections

We seek to deepen our connections to one another. This is a desire that is fervently expressed across all age groups in our congregation. At times we struggle with being sufficiently welcoming to others, but we aspire to be a community of faith for all and a haven in times of need. In this success-driven world, we desire a place where we feel safe sharing our failures as well as our successes.

2) Inviting and Engaging Worship

Worship is the bedrock of our connection with the Spirit and represents a critical opportunity to strengthen the vitality of this faith community. We discern a desire for worship at LAC to deepen our connection to the Divine and to be more inspiring. There is a broad diversity of opinions regarding the path forward, but we believe that through moving and meaningful sermons, uplifting music and reflective prayer, we find the ties that bind us together in our common faith.

3) Mission and Discipleship

We believe that, as disciples of Christ, we are called to lives of service to others. We discern a longing for greater engagement in service. Our members, young and old, find deep meaning in serving others and seek more opportunity to do so together. Through service to those in need, we strengthen not only our faith, but also the bonds within this faith community.

4) Youth Programs

We wish to integrate our youth more fully into the life of this faith community, in worship and in service. Our youth find deep fulfillment in serving others and seek opportunities to employ their gifts to make a difference. When we serve with them, when we worship with them, we are inspired by them. Indeed, Youth Sunday is one of the most popular services of the year. Our teens are seeking meaningful connections just as we are. They often feel disconnected from the congregation as a whole and desire more opportunities for inter-generational fellowship.

Key Steps in Fulfilling These Purposes – Short-Term Goals (1-3 years):

We believe that our vision of fostering deeper connections within the congregation calls for focus in two areas: increased fellowship and opportunities for shared service.

Deepen Relationships Through Intergenerational Fellowship Opportunities – LAC needs a better platform to deepen fellowship within the congregation. We recommend pursuing the following initiatives:

- The newly established Welcoming Committee is a good first step. The Committee should be strengthened in size and should work with staff to re-engage the congregation in opportunities for fellowship outside of worship.
- We also recommend re-establishing a paid position focused on congregational life. In the past, persons fulfilling this role, formerly called the Church Visitor, have been critical in fostering deeper connections within the congregation and in bringing new members into our faith community. We understand, however, that someone in this position can lead only by example, and that ensuring a welcoming atmosphere starts with us. In fact, the most successful past Church Visitors have been members of the congregation. Additionally, we should consider programs like Stephens Ministry, which was active at LAC in the past, to enhance layperson pastoral care.
- We also believe that additional social offerings will help revitalize our connections with one another. Shared community service, adult retreats, multi-generational mission trips, prayer groups, and shared meals both inside and outside of church are examples of successful programs in LAC's past that should be revived. There is also a desire for successful existing programs like adult education groups to be expanded. While we recognize that competing scheduling demands have stymied efforts in the past, a clear desire for such events has been expressed by the congregation, and we believe that additional fellowship opportunities are necessary to build a more caring community that enjoys deeper connections with each other in faith.

Inviting and Engaging Worship – We believe the Worship and Music Committee must be re-established to work with the Pastors and Director of Music to ensure that our worship services maintain an open, inviting and inspiring quality. There appears to be some appetite for changes to the worship service, but at the same time, our members have reverence for tradition. We understand the need to be patient and open as we explore the broad array of different ideas expressed during the focus groups. The Worship & Music Committee should actively work with staff to experiment and to seek feedback regarding our worship service. The Mission Study Committee will be glad to provide the Committee with the suggestions raised in the focus groups.

Mission and Discipleship – Our calling as disciples of Christ is centered around service to others. We should explore new ways to connect our members with opportunities to serve others. In particular, we believe that intergenerational service events, appropriate for families and a broad range of ages, will foster deeper connections within our faith community. It is important not only to promote opportunities with our existing faith partners more broadly, but also to organize more events akin to the Day of Discipleship, when 75 members gathered at LAC and departed in groups to serve at various community organizations. There is clearly an opportunity for LAC to be part of the fabric of the community, as there are residents in need of help within our immediate area of Mamaroneck/Larchmont as well as New Rochelle. We should endeavor to strengthen our communication platforms to enable easy sign up and coordination for all members who plan service outings.

Excellence in Youth Programs – Both adults and youth have expressed a desire for joint service opportunities, and for youth to be more closely integrated into worship services and the workings of the church. In fact, our high school youth group, SHiFT, has proposed an inter-generational book group. The Youth Ministry Committee should seek to expand opportunities for adults to foster relationships with youth, such as chaperoning youth events and serving as Faith Partners to Confirmants. Resources should be made available when needed for opportunities to build deeper relationships within our Youth Groups, through community-building exercises like retreats, mission trips or local service opportunities.

OUR NEXT SENIOR PASTOR

Worship is central to the life of the church, and preaching is central to worship. We seek a senior pastor who consistently delivers insightful sermons that will inspire us in mind and soul. We are a capable, highly-educated congregation who can respond positively to an array of approaches at the pulpit, whether analytical expositions of scripture or inspiring messages straight from the heart.

We feel at a crossroads at LAC; there is great potential here, but also a concern that without the right senior pastor it may remain untapped. The generation that blessed us with its service and treasure is disappearing; our next senior pastor will have to call on us to continue their work.

We believe that deeper connections with each other within our congregation will foster greater spiritual vitality. Our mission study survey revealed that our congregation feels the need for such closer connections: we want to build a more tightly knit family of faith and support. In an affluent suburb where great focus is placed upon success, we desire a senior pastor capable of building a faith community in which we are willing to air our human frailties and struggles as easily as we share our joys.

At the same time, there is constant competition in our increasingly secular community for the time and attention of adults and children. Both our desire for connectedness and the mounting external distractions increase the need for a senior pastor who will help us make the church hum with the sounds of fellowship, connection and social outreach, and help us better welcome the unchurched and marginalized.

We seek a senior pastor with strong experience and leadership skills who can inspire a talented congregation whose members have a strong desire to serve others. The senior pastor must be able to lead within the Presbyterian tradition of active boards, committees, and congregants, both by advice and example. We seek a senior pastor also who understands the power of digital ministry and social media to expand the reach of LAC and connect with the congregation and community in new ways. Finally, we seek a senior pastor who will help us to reimagine Stewardship, as we begin to consider ways to inspire increased giving.

We seek a senior pastor whose energy and ambition will match and lead ours.

WHO WE ARE

Our History

LAC's humble beginnings date back to 1914, when 40 people met at the home of Emily Lindsley, daughter of a Presbyterian minister, to form the congregation which would become our church. Property was purchased in 1915 and the sanctuary in which we worship today was dedicated in 1930. From its early days, LAC aspired to be "a 7-day church for a 7-day need," and many community organizations used the new space, among them the Women's Club, the Garden Club, the Men's Club, the Society of Friends and the Masons. During the Great Depression, LAC managed to keep its doors open by the generosity of its members, who brought in silver, gold, and jewelry to be sold to fill the coffers.

During World War II, the Red Cross used LAC's Church House facilities for its war work. In 1947, the great West Window, the "Christ of the Resurrection" window, was installed as a memorial to the men and women of LAC who served in the Armed Forces during the war. LAC's 50th anniversary celebration took place in 1964, and speakers at that event included the pastor of the first church to integrate in Ohio, and another who had just returned from civil rights marches in Mississippi.

LAC has always been a haven for families. Sunday School has been part of LAC since the beginning, and was once the largest Presbyterian Sunday School in Westchester. The Church School wing was built in 1953. Fellowship outreach during the 1980s took the form of the Candlelighters young married group, Steak Under the Stars, the first annual Block Party in 1985 and Tot Drop, a cooperative morning babysitting group that began in 1983. Today, LAC continues to host a robust Christian education program, is home to a community preschool, and welcomes families with open arms during and after worship.

Community outreach has long been a cornerstone of our church. LAC began its support of HOPE (Help Our People Eat), delivered hot meals to homeless families at the Larchmont Motel and contributed to Oxfam America. The Midnight Run began in 1992, in cooperation with Larchmont Temple, bringing meals and clothing to the homeless in New York City. 1994 was designated as a “Year of Outreach,” within the congregation and to the community. At the end of December 2001, a group of 20 travelled to Nicaragua on LAC’s first international Mission Trip. Last year, a group of youth and adults took a mission trip to Atlanta. LAC has forged relationships with mission partners within the community, including the Community Resource Center, Bridges to Community, and the STEM Alliance. Additionally, with the creation of our Eco Task Force, we are positioned to become a leader within the community on sustainability efforts.

LAC joyously celebrated its centennial in 2014. Thanks to the generosity of our members, the church undertook a series of capital improvements, redesigned our website, launched a Facebook page, and established weekly online Church Notes. Although our building looks different 100 years later and our methods of outreach have progressed, our foundation remains unchanged: we are a community of Christ, dedicated to strengthening our commitment to live as Christians through worship, service and education.

LAC’s Senior Pastors

Rev. Charles Carhart	1914-1922
Rev. Robert Russell	1922-1939
Rev. Floyd McGuire	1940-1964
Rev. James Emerson	1965-1969
Rev. Calvin DeVries	1970-1977
Rev. Richard Martin	1978-1997
Rev. William Crawford	1999-2018

OUR CONTEXT

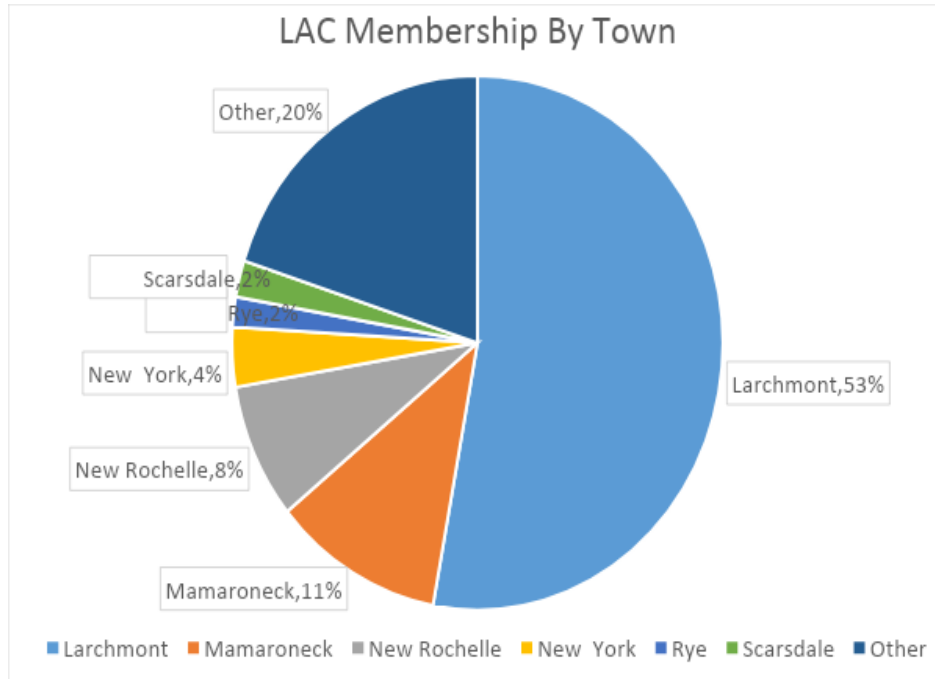
Community Demographics

We felt it important to understand the demographics and religious participation of the population surrounding LAC. We examined a study combining U.S. Census data and a proprietary faith study by The Percept Group, a research firm which focuses on helping churches develop their mission.

In addition to reviewing the Percept study, we met with the Mayor of Larchmont (Lorraine Walsh) and the Mamaroneck Town Supervisor (Nancy Seligson) to learn more about the future of the community and critical challenges or needs of their constituents. The mayors provided a wealth of information that can help LAC become an even more helpful resource in the two towns.

The Mission Study committee analyzed both the immediate community surrounding LAC, which is the Village of Larchmont (approximately 1-mile radius around the church) as well as the broader surrounding communities (5-mile radius around the church). The following summarizes our findings and insights about the community:

- The population of Larchmont is 17,000 versus the larger surrounding community (Mamaroneck, New Rochelle and Pelham) of 114,000.
- The population of the broader community has grown since the 2000 census by 8% and is projected to remain stable over the next 5 years.
- Diversity from both a lifestyle and ethnic standpoint is high versus the national average, although there is less diversity in Larchmont (zip code 10538) than in the broader community:
 - Larchmont is 77% affluent and 83% Anglo.
 - In our broader community, ethnic diversity is much higher than in Larchmont. Anglos represent 50.7% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up 49.4%, which is somewhat above the national average of 40%. The largest of these groups, Hispanics/Latinos, accounts for 28.6% of the total population. Asians are projected to be the fastest growing group, with the population expected to increase by 11.5% between 2019 and 2024.
 - Overall, the broader community is highly affluent and educated as compared to the national average. Over half the population is married and traditionally minded, and 53% have children in the public school systems.
- The segment categorized as “Up and Coming Families,” headed by adults 25-45 years old, accounts for 27% of the population, almost double the national average. They are aspirational and looking for good school systems.



Some 25% of the broader community reported an overall decrease in their faith involvement over the last ten years. The Presbyterian faith remains a small segment of the current population:

- 39% Catholic
- 25% other Christian, including 3% Presbyterian
- 10% Jewish
- 26% other

The study reveals consistent trends that are typical for affluent northeastern U.S. communities:

- Top 2 Priorities in life are financial security and finding time for recreation/leisure
- Top 2 Spiritual/Personal Priorities are dealing with stress and finding companionship
- Finding a good church (7%) and Spiritual Teaching (7%) are cited less than half as often as the national average.

LAC aspires to be a welcoming faith community. We are aware that the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the broader community is not reflected in LAC's active membership and worship. Should LAC desire to address this disparity, we believe that deliberate strategies relating to worship style, community involvement and other areas would need to be developed. This underscores the need not only for a revival of the Worship & Music Committee, but also for us to consider new social opportunities and mission outreach.

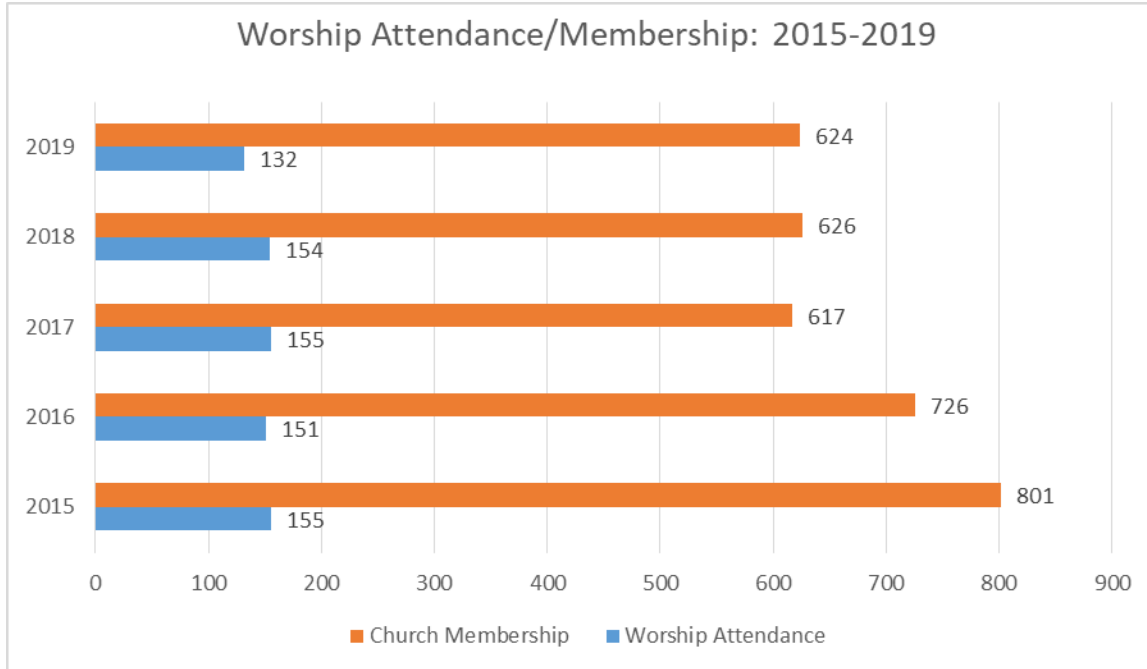
The demographic trends in the immediate area will continue to provide a growth opportunity for LAC with new young families moving to Larchmont and seeking a safe town with excellent schools. The towns are planning for continued growth in school enrollments. As we address the core areas to energize LAC by improving worship, deepening connections, cultivating mission and discipleship, and growing our youth programs, we will be in a strong position to attract more new members to LAC. It is within our control with our faith in God to create a path for LAC to thrive over the next five to ten years.

Given the communities' affluent population of highly-educated, successful people with extremely busy lives, it will be important for LAC to market itself as a progressive church, offering people of all ages a safe haven where they can find friends and opportunities for spiritual growth. Offering strong youth programs that can meet the growing expectations of millennial families will be important to this effort. The preschool too will be an important magnet to attract new members. With the preschool's excellent reputation and recent hiring of a new director, Alexandra Belluzzi, we are on a positive course to achieve this goal.

LAC may consider expanding its ministry into North New Rochelle and Mamaroneck where there are underserved populations, albeit ones that are more diverse than in the area immediately surrounding LAC. Younger singles and families are moving into these areas with the recently increased development of upscale apartment buildings. We need to expand the reach of our communications and increase awareness of LAC as a center for a rich array of educational, music, spiritual and youth programs. An integral part of any effort to expand our ministries would be to establish digital media programs to reach these arriving younger families, leveraging social media and streaming media to engage the younger generations.

Our Church Membership

The membership of our congregation is largely white, educated, and over 45 years old. Specifically, members are 89% white; 54% of the congregation is between 45 and 64 years old, with 29% 65 and older; and 89% have a college degree or higher. The congregation is 63% female. Overall, 41% are in a 4-5-person household, with 35% part of a 2-person household, and 66% of the congregation live within two miles of church. Additionally, we welcomed 13 new members in the last year, as compared to 16 new members in 2018, and 25 new members in 2017.



OUR RESOURCES

Our Buildings – Description of Facilities

Larchmont Avenue Church is located at 60 Forest Avenue in Larchmont, NY. The church is situated on 0.60 acres within the Village of Larchmont. LAC’s facilities consist of two connected buildings: The Church Building and the Christian Education Building. The Church Building totals 23,400 square feet and the Christian Education Building contains an additional 15,200 square feet.

LAC also owns a manse for the use of its Senior Pastor, located next door to the Church Building at 181 Larchmont Avenue. This newly-renovated three-story home contains four bedrooms, two full bathrooms, a detached two-car garage and an enclosed sun porch and outdoor deck, totals 4,170 square feet and is located on 0.24 acres. The home is fully air conditioned with a new system.

LAC also owns a manse for the use of its Associate Pastor, located at 210 Villa Avenue in Mamaroneck, NY, approximately 3.5 miles from the Church and situated on a 0.19-acre parcel. The home is a two-story colonial with four bedrooms, two and one-half bathrooms and an attached garage and porch/deck, totaling 2,458 square foot.

Expected Maintenance

Over the next five years, we anticipate that major projects with respect to the Church Building and Christian Education Building will include the following: roof repair, such as replacing roof parapet copings and the church spire, masonry repair, classroom renovations, bathroom renovations in the Christian Ed Building, renovation to the Russell Hall meeting space and other work spaces in the Church Building, and life/safety system upgrades. Longer term, we anticipate that replacement of significant portions of the roof structure will be required.

Remodeling Required

The Church Building and Education Building contain many multi-functional rooms including full projection/presentation facilities, a full kitchen and meeting space for groups of a wide range of sizes. We do not believe additional remodeling is required to carry out the near-term goals of LAC.

Assessed Value

The current assessed value of Larchmont Avenue Church's Sanctuary and Christian Education Building is \$7,175,000. The Senior Manse was most recently assessed at \$1,040,000 and is currently undergoing a \$550,000 renovation. The Associate Manse was most recently assessed at \$712,000.

OUR FINANCES

Operating Budget

As shown in the table below, in 2018 a decrease in LAC's Stewardship revenue resulted in an operating deficit of \$85,000. This deficit was funded by the Operating Reserve. In 2019, increased Stewardship revenue boosted by a one-time matching contribution totaling \$150,000 resulted in a \$30,000 surplus. However, LAC's 2020 Budget projects an operating deficit exceeding \$240,000, which represents 24% of LAC's annual operating expenses.

Larchmont Avenue Church
Summary Statement of Operations

<u>Operating Revenue:</u>	2017	2018	2019
Stewardship	\$ 860,439	\$ 758,550	\$ 880,278
Nursery School Contributi	86,400	86,400	86,400
Other Revenue	18,600	65,043	66,622
Total Operating Revenue	965,439	909,993	1,033,300
 <u>Expenses:</u>			
Benevolence	42,810	41,446	40,116
Ministry	238,453	230,977	214,001
Music	160,697	159,535	166,467
Education	50,013	33,736	56,951
Congregation	43,679	47,633	45,159
Administration	149,955	167,173	163,288
Property	305,450	314,730	313,990
Total Operating Expenses	991,057	995,230	999,972
 Operating Surplus (Deficit)	 (25,618)	 (85,237)	 33,328

Endowment and Other Funds

As of December 31, 2019, the total value of LAC's Endowment, including various specified funds, was \$5.1 million. Usage of the Endowment is restricted to capital expenditures and other replacements and/or improvements to LAC's property.

As of December 31, 2019, the total value of LAC's Operating Reserve was \$225,000. The Operating Reserve was created to fund operating deficits.

In addition, LAC has other funds whose uses are variously restricted totaling \$501,000.

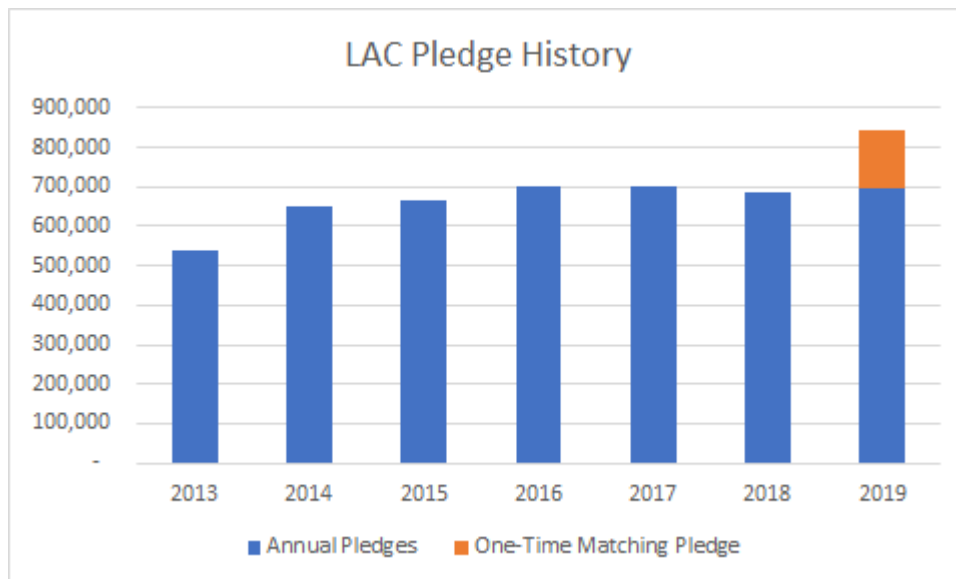
Other Real Estate Assets

As discussed above, the current tax assessment of the Senior Pastor's manse is \$1,050,000. However, its current estimated market value is \$1,600,000, prior to taking into consideration any increase in value as a result of the \$550,000 renovation currently underway. The estimated market value of the Associate Pastor's manse is \$800,000, approximately equal to its assessment.

Stewardship

Pledges for the past five years are depicted in the chart below. Pledges of \$846,000 in 2019 included a one-time pledge of \$150,000, without which pledges totaled \$696,000, a 1.5% increase over 2018 pledges. Excluding the one-time pledge, pledges have increased by 29% since 2013, a compound annual growth rate of 4.4%. However, increases have flattened in recent years and will need to increase substantially in order for LAC to fund operating expenses on a continuing basis. We believe that growth in active membership will have to occur in order to consistently fund LAC’s operations from Stewardship revenue.

Note that Stewardship revenue shown in the Statement of Operations above includes non-pledged contributions. In 2018, pledges totaled \$685,000, whereas overall Stewardship revenue totaled \$759,000. In 2017, pledges totaled \$701,000, whereas overall Stewardship revenue totaled \$860,000.



We feel that growth in active membership will be needed in order to consistently fund LAC’s operations from Stewardship revenue. At the same time, we are mindful of the fact that a church that seeks to grow its membership merely for the sake of increased giving is unlikely to thrive. We believe that growth is achieved by strengthening our own spiritual vitality—in particular, by achieving the priorities we have addressed in this Report.

OUR LEADERSHIP

Current Staff

Under the leadership of a new Senior Pastor and with the re-establishment of the Church Visitor position as discussed previously, we believe the current staff should be capable of helping LAC achieve the vision laid out in this report.

LAC has a church staff of six, plus a preschool staff of 15. The church staff comprises a Senior Pastor/Head of Staff and an Associate Pastor, a Director of Music Ministry, a part-time Director of Christian Education, a part-time Bookkeeper, and a Church Secretary/Communications Coordinator. We have outsourced custodial services to two sextons who are employed by Parish Property Management under contract with the church.

Our full-time Interim Pastor/Head of Staff, Rev. Ellen Clark Clémot, was called in November 2018 following the retirement of our previous minister after his 19 years of service with LAC. We have renewed our Interim Pastor's contract for one year as of November 2019, with great appreciation for Rev. Clémot's strong leadership and compassionate guidance during this transition. Rev. Clémot has quickly become part of the fabric of LAC, delivers powerful sermons, and inspires us with her positive approach to ministry.

Our Associate Pastor, Rev. Elizabeth Smith-Bartlett, has been with LAC for five years. Rev. Smith-Bartlett is a generalist whose terms of call include oversight of youth activities, liaison work with the Deacons, pastoral care, and leadership of worship. During her tenure, Rev. Smith-Bartlett has excelled in all of these areas, and LAC is blessed by her commitment. Indeed, throughout the Mission Study Committee's information-gathering phases, members expressed immense gratitude for Rev. Smith Bartlett's many gifts, chief among them her ability to effectively and compassionately minister to members of all ages.

Our full-time Director of Music Ministry, Douglas Kostner, plays the organ and piano with panache, conducts the chancel choir and has developed the Larchmont Symphonia and Larchmont Chorale, which occasionally assist in our worship and also perform periodically for the public in our sanctuary. Music is important to our congregation and we are guilty of some pride in the church's pipe organ, with almost 3,000 pipes, whose installation was completed in 2008.

The office staff also includes our church secretary/communications coordinator, Marranda Major, and our part-time bookkeeper, Gloria Haq. Ms. Major, who has on occasion preached during worship, graduated from seminary in 2018 and is actively seeking a call to join a church as an installed member of the clergy.

In addition, Chrystal Chambers is our interim Director of Christian Education, a part-time paid position. Ms. Chambers is responsible for organizing and overseeing the Sunday School as well as various intergenerational educational events. It is an open question whether this role may merge into the Associate Pastor's sphere of responsibilities in the

future. Last year we conducted a search for a permanent Director of Christian Education and were unable to fill that position with a suitable candidate, probably due in some degree to its part-time nature. Ms. Chambers is a member of the congregation and does a superb job but does not expect to continue in the role indefinitely.

The LAC Preschool is an owned arm of our church and is a non-sectarian preschool accredited by the State of New York. In addition to its Director, who was hired in June 2019 (following the retirement of the previous director after 45 years of service) and its faculty, the preschool is staffed by an Administrative Assistant, who works with the church secretary/communications coordinator.

Board and Committee Support

The Session is the governing council of LAC and comprises 12 elders, each serving a three-year term in staggered annual classes of four. The Session meets monthly, and the Senior Pastor serves as moderator; both the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor have a vote.

LAC bylaws establish a separate Board of Trustees to administer the financial affairs and tangible assets of the church as a New York corporation, subject to the Session's approval. There are nine trustees, each serves a three-year term in staggered annual classes of three.

The Board of Deacons is composed of 15 members, each serving three-year terms in staggered annual classes of five. Additionally, LAC typically elects two high school students as youth deacons to a one-year term. The Deacons' main role is pastoral care, including parish care, hospitality support for memorial services, sanctuary decoration, and ministries of compassion and service.

Standing committees and working groups of the boards are in place to lead particular ministries and programs of LAC which are described in the next section. In addition, working groups are in place to lead particular ministries and programs of LAC, as described below.

OUR MINISTRY FOCUS

Programs and Ministries of the LAC Congregation

- **Sunday School** provides Christian Education to children from Pre-K (age 3) through 7th grade and takes place most Sunday mornings during the school year. Children begin Sunday mornings at LAC participating in Worship at 10 am with their parents and guardians, then are dismissed from Worship to Sunday School immediately following the "For All God's Children" message. On Communion Sundays (first Sunday of each month), children begin in their Sunday School classes at 10 am concurrent with the start of Worship, and then are brought to congregational Worship for communion. Currently ~105 children are in our database, ~85 children are registered, and average attendance is ~37 which is a modest increase from the prior school year.

- **Nursery / Toddler Class:** A professionally staffed Nursery is available all Sundays during worship for infants up to age three. Nursery care includes an age appropriate Christian curriculum or lesson each week.
- **Music ministry** at LAC provides opportunities for members and non-members to participate in a variety of music programs throughout the year:
 - **Chancel Choir** is composed of approximately 20 adults who sing with the congregation, including four paid soloists, and also share special music/solos, during Sunday worship services.
 - **Larchmont Symphonia** is a community orchestra ensemble of all ages; the Symphonia participates in worship many times each year and provides dedicated and developing young musicians to play alongside seasoned professionals.
 - **Westchester Children's Choir** (~ 35 children) and Westchester Chorale (~40 adults) meet and perform at LAC; their membership draws from the greater community and includes members of LAC.
- **Youth Ministry programs:**
 - **TGIF** is a program for Middle School students (6th - 8th grades), which meets weekly at LAC and is focused on service opportunities, fellowship and learning. TGIF also holds an annual local mini-retreat. Currently there are ~15-20 middle schoolers at LAC, but program attendance varies.
 - **SHiFT** is a program for High School students (9th - 12th grades) which also meets weekly at LAC and is focused on service, fellowship and learning. The SHiFT group also typically participates in an annual mission trip to serve and learn, away from home by partnering with an established ministry, group or church in its local context. Currently, about 30 high schoolers are at LAC; similar to TGIF, attendance varies.
 - **Confirmation Class** is offered to 8th graders and currently consists of five students, although class size varies and has been much larger in certain years. The confirmation process at LAC is year-long, giving students a chance to think about and explore different aspects of their faith with their peers, pastors, and faith partners. A unique component of our confirmation is that membership is separate from confirmation, allowing students the opportunity to discern whether they are ready to join the church at the end of the faith confirmation process.

Session Standing Committees and Working Groups

- **Christian Education** includes the following:
 - **Adult Education** – Members of the congregation, our pastors and guest speakers offer lectures and discussion, with a focus on exploring our Christian heritage and beliefs through theological study.
 - **Children's Ministry** – Together with the Director of Christian Education, our Children's Ministry is responsible for the Sunday School program for children and the Sunday morning nursery. The sub-committee also plans

mission/benevolence projects for Sunday School children and organizes special events such as the Advent and Lenten workshops.

- **LAC Preschool** – For more than 40 years, Larchmont Avenue Church has maintained a tuition-funded, secular preschool promoting physical, social, emotional and intellectual development in children, with specific programming for each of the age groups (Twos, Threes and Fours). LAC Preschool offers both morning and afternoon programs for each age program. LAC Preschool also offers Extended Day Program for Threes, and an Enrichment Program for its Fours; each of these programs run from 11:45am - 3:15pm. The preschool does not aspire to offer any full-day options. There are currently 94 Children enrolled in LAC preschool. The Preschool is professionally staffed. It operates as part of the LAC Corporation and maintains a separate accounting of preschool revenues and expenses. The Preschool is subject to Session governance and the LAC Board of Trustees serves as the school's finance council.
- **Church & Society** – Church and Society is responsible for the mission outreach of LAC, including the distribution of benevolence funds and the coordination of activities of our congregation on matters of community, national and international social concern. The Committee serves as the official liaison in LAC's relationship with its mission partners. Benevolence monies (about \$40,000 annually) are raised and distributed principally three ways, with Session approval:
 - General Mission, the PCUSA
 - Session Causes
 - Special Offerings and Fundraisers such as One Great Hour of Sharing and World Communion Sunday
- **Welcoming** – The Welcome Committee is focused on welcoming new members, worship welcome, and congregational communications.
 - **Women's Fellowship** is a newly formed initiative under Welcoming which seeks to meet several times a year for a pot-luck social in members' homes.
 - **Ushers & Greeters**
 - **New Member Welcome Committee**
 - **Annual Block Party**
- **Personnel** – This committee works with the Senior Pastor as head of staff in evaluating and enhancing the work of church personnel. Personnel maintains job descriptions for staff, participates in annual reviews with the Senior Pastor, works to ensure LAC has effective personnel policies, procedures and benefit programs; and is responsible for supervision of the personnel portion of the church budget.
- **Youth Ministry** – This committee works with the Associate Pastor and the Director of Christian Education in support of LAC's youth ministry program. Youth Ministry's goals are to provide a group of lay leaders as a resource, to serve as knowledgeable volunteers for youth activities, and assist in recruiting and coordinating volunteers.

- **Worship & Music** (not currently active) – In the past LAC had a Worship & Music committee which assisted in the planning and preparation of the Sunday worship service. This committee ceased during the term of the previous senior pastor, and has been recommended for re-constitution to work with the Interim Pastor and our anticipated new senior pastor.
- **Eco Task Force** – LAC members work to find ways to reduce the church’s carbon footprint and to raise awareness among members of the congregation and surrounding community about the importance of doing so.

Joint Session/Trustee Committees and Working Groups

- **Finance** – This committee is responsible for supervising the fiscal operation of the church and its budget approved by Trustees and Session. Finance also cares for the investment of church funds and endowment funds subject to LAC practice and policy. Trustees’ responsibilities also encompass LAC Preschool finances.
- **Stewardship** – This committee is dedicated to raising awareness and support of stewardship participation and opportunities, and raising funds necessary to support the church’s operating budget through the annual stewardship / giving campaign. Stewardship also educates the congregation to raise awareness about Planned Giving opportunities.
- **All-Church Nominating Committee** – This committee is responsible for identifying candidates to serve on Session, Deacons, and Trustees, along with other ad hoc committees on an as needed basis.

Deacons’ Ministry

Deacons provide a valuable ministry of service, witness and compassion to LAC the community, and undertake several responsibilities:

- **Communion**- coordination of purchase, preparation, and maintenance of communion service
- **Parish Care** – Serves to organize church volunteers to visit members in need of support because of age, infirmity or difficult circumstances.
- **Memorial Hospitality and Food Connection** – Service following funerals and memorial services, and delivers food to homebound members or those in need.
- **June Picnic** - coordination of the picnic held after worship on the last day of Sunday School each school year.
- **Holiday Decorations** – Procurement, display and post-holiday distribution of flowers (Easter) and poinsettias (Christmas), and the hanging of the wreaths before Christmas.
- **Coffee Hour** – Coordination of food and drinks for coffee hour immediately after worship.

- **HOPE (Help Our People Eat)** – Coordination of congregational service opportunities monthly at HOPE soup kitchen and food pantry in New Rochelle, where a dedicated team serves a meal; also work to collect food for donation.

Additional Programs and Ministry Opportunities at LAC

- **Midnight Run** – Every 6 weeks on Saturday nights, LAC partners with the Larchmont Temple to send six cars loaded with clothing, toiletries, bag lunches, soup and backpacks to Manhattan to distribute much needed supplies to our homeless friends who live on the street.
- **Coachman Family Center** is a 100-unit homeless shelter focusing predominantly on families in need. A group from LAC visits Coachman monthly to share a healthy dessert and arts/crafts/games/conversation with Coachman’s young children residents.
- **Larchmont / Mamaroneck Hunger Task Force’s** Thanksgiving Food Drive
- **Rummage Sale** – An annual event, when church members donate their gently used clothing, housewares and more. An opportunity for church members to work together. Usually takes place in the Spring.
- **Day of Discipleship** – Launched in 2019, the Day of Discipleship is an opportunity for the congregation to gather for breakfast and blessing before being sent, in groups, into the community, to work with our community partners that serve those in need around us.
- **Men’s Bible Study** – Meets biweekly on Thursday mornings at 8 am, sharing a textual study over coffee and bagels, and generous camaraderie.
- **Christmas Baskets** – LAC members sign up for gifting needs and requests of specific families in need from the surrounding community. Gifts are collected, wrapped, and then distributed to recipient families in advance of Christmas.
- **Shepherd’s Watch** – Newly launched program of the Board of Trustees to enhance security on LAC’s premises.
- **The Sharing Shelf** – local mission partner to which LAC members donate old clothes
- **Community Resource Center**- community organization seeking to celebrate diversity and promote the cultural, economic, educational and professional integration of immigrants to the community.
- **Co-Op Summer Enrichment** – summer youth program run by the STEM Alliance

Other outside groups that use LAC's facilities (some pay fees for use)

- **AA and Al-Anon** hold biweekly meetings at LAC, and have been meeting at LAC for over 50 years.
- **Washingtonville Housing Alliance** assists with housing needs and supports community-building for low- and moderate-income residents in Mamaroneck.
- **Bible Study Fellowship** – LAC is currently a host church for Bible Study Fellowship's Westchester Women's Day Group, which meets Thursdays from 9:30am -11:00 am.
- **At Home On the Sound** provides its members with the assistance they need to continue to live confidently at home in their later years.
- **C.U.R.E.** – Coalition for Understanding Racism through Education
- **Garden Club of Larchmont**
- **Women's Club of Larchmont**
- **Soccer Shots**

Many of the above programs and ministries contribute to the purpose of LAC as presented in our Mission Statement: Together they "...bear witness to God's love and grace through *worship, service, and education.*" The list of ministries, programs, and opportunities to serve is long and varied. Service opportunities seem more heavily weighted toward "others", such as addressing our neighbors' physical needs, or welcoming our neighbors. It is not as easy to identify those geared toward providing a "safe haven" and space for burden sharing within our congregation.

CONCLUSION

This Report, a synthesis of information gleaned throughout our months-long process of self-discernment, highlights the many gifts we have to offer, the challenges we face, and the areas where we must improve. Replete with recommendations, observations, and optimism, the Mission Study should be the start of a conversation, or perhaps even a lightning rod, as LAC opens a new chapter.