



Why Merge?

Why would two existing churches join together rather than continue on their own? Why would two groups sacrifice buildings, power structures, control, and comfortable surroundings? Because God is calling us to greater. We all have a choice to either hear stories of people stepping out in faith or we can be a part of stepping out in great faith and be a part of the great story.

We began praying for our churches as God called us to them. We developed a friendship and began praying for one another and for the churches that we represented. Out of this we sensed God began to speak. Over a breakfast, during which scribbled notes on a napkin felt like the work of the Holy Spirit, we sensed God may be stirring in us a shared vision for our churches. This vision recognized the realities of where we are.

Both our churches have great stories of faithful people stepping out in faith at different times. Both our churches have stories of investment in evangelism and discipleship, both our churches have great stories of investing in families, and of building relationships in the community. We each have a history, a shared past, and we don't want to lose that.

However, every church study will tell you that new churches are more likely to reach pre-Christian people. If that is true, how can we be a part of that and still honor the heritage that has been left for us? What if our heritage is less about location and facility and more about calling? What if the calling is to remember our past and look to a new future?

It seems to be God has called us together "for such a time as this." Through shared resources, renewed vision, shared gifts, shared leaderships and staff, we believe God wants to do a new thing. This new thing does not negate the old, but it calls us to radical obedience and a messiness, a holy discontent. It eternally matters that we reach a lost and dying world with the hope of Jesus.

It is with deep humility, prayerful consideration, and an intense urgency that we believe we should merge two local churches into one, that we share a vision for West Michigan, and a church that will do whatever it takes to reach those that no one else is reaching. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, and we believe together we can increase both the harvest and the workers at a greater rate than we can alone. We believe we are better together

Why Crossbridge?

- Two churches merging together where we literally have to cross a bridge to come together.
- There are chasms that keep us from connecting to one another and to God. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will be a people who build bridges to connect one another and to Jesus.
- God in his love for us erases whatever gaps need bridged in the various aspects of our lives.
- As a community of faith we want to bridge gaps in families, in our community, and in whatever keeps people from knowing Jesus.

Why Merge? (Summarized)

Why would Lakes Community and GHN join together rather than continue on their own?

General Reasons Why Churches Merge:

- 1) Out of Desperation --- NOT us
- 2) Out of Competition --- NOT us
- 3) Vision & Strategy--- US

There are essentially 3 primary reasons why the merging of our two congregations into one is a “preferred future state” for us all...

#1 – The Call of God Inspires Us

- Our story (personal testimony): “We began praying for our churches as God called us to them. We developed a friendship and began praying for one another and for the churches that we represented. Out of this we sensed God began to speak. Over a breakfast, during which scribbled notes on a napkin felt like the work of the Holy Spirit, we sensed God may be stirring in us a shared vision for our churches.”
- Isaiah 43:19 “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”
- We’ve not encountered a direct word against this line of thinking, either from Scripture, in prayer, as we’ve sought wise counsel, or as we’ve looked around at various contemporary examples of growing churches.

#2 – The Mission of God Focuses Us

- Honoring the Heritage: Local, Denominational, and Universal
- How can we honor the heritage that has been left for us and move toward the new thing God has for us? What if our heritage is less about location and facility and more about calling? What if the calling is to remember our past and pursue a new future?
- We believe God wants to do a new thing. This new thing does not negate the old, but it calls us to radical obedience to God by entering intentionally into our chaotic, consumeristic and competitive culture with a lifestyle of love and peace fueled by the gospel of grace we’ve found in Jesus Christ.
- We want to be “a church that will do whatever it takes to reach those that no one else is reaching” -Craig Groeschel (Lead Pastor at Life Church, the largest American Church who gives more free resources than anyone else. If you have a Bible App on your phone, thank them!)

#3 – The Realities of Life Constrain Us

- “However, every church study will tell you that new churches are more likely to reach pre-Christian people.”¹
- Unknown Societal Issues – require more serious attention to resourcing and organization than in previous days, or other cultures.
- Resources: Time, Talent, Treasure... “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” and we believe together we can increase both the harvest and the workers at a greater rate than we can alone.

¹ <http://lifewayresearch.com/2015/12/08/new-churches-draw-those-who-previously-didnt-attend/>

Donald McGavran and George Hunter, in Church Growth: Strategies that Work quote Lyle Schaller, saying, “Numerous studies have shown that 60-80% of the new adult members of new congregations are persons who were not actively involved in the life of any worshiping community By contrast, most long established churches draw the majority of their new adult members from persons who transfer in from other congregations.” <https://blog.umcdiscipleship.org/eight-great-reasons-to-start-new-churches/>

Timeline of Events

January 2017: Pastor Aaron tasked to go and pray for the church and its future as was the Lakes board

February 2017: Pastors Aaron and Stephen met for support and prayer

(Out of this conversation began a prayer for discernment as to whether or not God was trying to marry two separate local churches into one local church)

March 2017: Courageous Leadership began challenging and trying to help discern if this venture was of God or of two pastors thinking this would be a quick way to have a greater impact.

December 2017: Board asked to prayerfully consider future marriage of churches

January 21, 2018: Meeting with both the Grand Haven Nazarene & Lakes Community Boards for dinner

February 4, 2018: Second meeting of Grand Haven and Lakes Community Boards in which a proposed plan, name, leadership structure, and rough timeline were laid out

February 12, 2018: The Lakes Community Church of the Nazarene Board voted in favor of merge

February 13, 2018: The Grand Haven Church of the Nazarene voted in favor of merge (marriage)

February 22, 2018: Pastors Stephen and Aaron met with the District Advisory Board

March 15, 2018: Pastors Stephen and Aaron met again with the district advisory board

April 8, 2018: Presentation to both churches on why marrying the efforts of The Lakes and Grand Haven is likely our best way forward. We are better together.

April 15, 2018: Town Hall Church Meeting with Pastor and Board Members (2PM)

April 22, 2018: Town Hall Church Meeting with Pastor and Board Members (6PM)

April 29, 2018: Combined Church Event; Worship, Prayer, and Devotional

May 6, 2018: Combined Church Event; Fellowship and Activity Driven

May 20, 2018: Town Hall Church Meeting with Pastor and Board Members (right after church)

June 3, 2018: The Lakes Naz and Grand Haven Naz vote

With Affirmative Vote, the following

August 5, 2018: First gathering of Crossbridge Church ("Soft" launch)

August 12, 2018: Official Election of New Church Board

October 7, 2018: Grand Opening of Crossbridge Church

Who We Are & Have Always Been Lakes Community and Grand Haven

Every group of people who gather together develop their own narrative, their own history. Over time what is seen again and again are the things that the community of people have valued. Our churches are no different. Through the lifespans of Lakes Community and Grand Haven Nazarene Churches, there are a few things that have surfaced as consistent values. These values are seen from the moment our churches were planted in their respective locations.

VALUES

- Evangelism
- Families (especially children and teenagers)
- The Community

EVANGELISM:

The Lakes: Over and over again we continue to see that the history of The Lakes has been centered around the idea that we want all people to know Jesus. We have attempted to do this from the beginning. We have tried it through driving around in cars with bullhorns, mailings, and the most effective way through personal relationships.

Grand Haven: Through a variety of moments in the life of GHN, this value can be seen shining through the activity of the church. Importantly, Grand Haven has always seen evangelism to our closest family members and friends as a primary mission field, while remembering to be diligent in our giving towards the Church's Missions efforts around the world.

FAMILIES:

The Lakes: The Lakes, or Eastwood, was launched around a group of families. The connection to family has always been a central desire of the community of faith. The Lakes gained several families because of the fact that there was a nursery. Over the years the commitment led to additional staff who specialized in areas of family ministry. Consistently, The Lakes has been the place for young families and for every generation.

Grand Haven: One of the most accurate descriptions of corporate gatherings at Grand Haven has been that they feel like a family reunion. Indeed, many of the regular participants in the life of the church are related biologically or through marriage! The church body has always tried to take care of one another as family.

THE COMMUNITY:

The Lakes: From softball and basketball leagues to fall festivals, and a community garden The Lakes has always tried to connect with those who are not already a part of what we are doing. There have been efforts through things like the Nazarene Community Resource Center, Habitat for Humanity, Senior Adult Services, and various other events to connect people to others and useful resources.

Grand Haven: Kids Hope, mission trips, Grace Gardens, Coast Guard Festival floats, Stephen Ministry and a water well for a Liberian Church of the Nazarene are just a few tangible examples of ways Grand Haven has demonstrated its desire that people who are away from God come to know His love and grace for them in Christ.

What has been will help us in developing what will be.....

What is consistent in each of these values is a willingness to try whatever it takes. Some of our efforts were effective and others were not effective, but a willingness to risk is consistent. For Lakes Community, the initial launch on the other side of town, launching 3 different campuses in 3 different ways, and 2 building programs show us a willingness to try something new has been consistent. For Grand Haven, the initial launch as basically a house church, the catapulting move in the early 60s to the current location, and building program of the 90s show a similar willingness to make sacrificial, personal investments for the sake of Kingdom advancement.

The future must include a renewed focus on effective evangelism, thriving families, and meaningful community service, led by a passionate people who are not afraid to take thoughtful risks in accomplishing the mission of the church.

Crossbridge Church

Our Vision

We believe God is calling us to be a movement of God to transform our community and one another. That transformation comes from changed individual lives; lives that are transformed through the love of God seen in Jesus. These individual lives will lead to a community of faith that is collectively transforming West Michigan. We want to help people reach their full God-potential. This calls us to help people take their next steps spiritually recognizing that each of us come from different places. Our journey's are unique, but we hope the destination is not.

This movement of God in our community will come through our commitment to share our personal faith stories of how God has transformed our lives. We know our stories are connected to God's great story of redemption. We will invite others to share in knowing Jesus, who is changing us. We will share stories in groups, one-on-one, and as a community of faith.

CrossBridge will be a church that strives to reach every generation and every form of family. We will foster events and ministries for all ages and we will always grow young. We will do this through the equipping of all who are a part of the community of faith. Authenticity will be key. We will be known for engaging and empowering the next generation. We will be known as the community of faith that trains and develops emerging leaders for service to the church and our community. This will stem from one of our central values to serve others inside and outside the church.

CrossBridge will foster life groups in which people experience true community. These groups will be a place of healing, friendship, support, and connection. This will be the true life of our community of faith. Connection with one another through discipleship and relationship building efforts is central to us being who God is calling us to be. We want to connect with one another in real and meaningful ways

We will have one or more centralized locations to gather on the weekend. We will never rest on what we have done until all people in our community know Jesus. Every person in our community matters to God and therefore they should matter to us. We will do this by thinking strategically, partnering with others, and by starting new works when and where God is leading. We will endeavor to live out of places of holy imagination not afraid of failure, but trying to be a part of something life-changing. Something that is not just worth living for, but dying for. We want to hold loosely to form and methods, but hold tightly to the mission and message of God; which is that through Jesus, God is redeeming, restoring the whole world, and making all things new.

Why Merge:

- **We are better together because we can go further faster and that eternally matters**
- **“Crossbridge Church exists to help bridge the gap in relationships, families, and our community through the love of Jesus”**
 - **“Because: God is for you, for your future, for your family, and for this community”**

FAQ for Church Marriage (merger)

Why?

There are really three questions that have prompted this conversation and carried it through:

- **Could we accomplish more together than separately?**
 - Yes! We would have an increased and more specialized staff, a better division of skills and gifts spread over more people, an ability to spend more ministry effort on investing in people versus facility.
- **Would our community be better served?**
 - Yes! Our hope is not that people would move to the place where the church gathers for a worship service, but that we would find our church's impact increasing as the footprint of our church would include more of the West Michigan Lakeshore.
- **Could the Kingdom of God be further extended by our merger?**
 - Yes! From a place of shared strength (people, finances, ministry offerings, staff) we will have opportunity to increase our impact more rapidly.

How are we better together?

- There's an African proverb that puts it this way: "When you run alone, you run fast. But when you run together, you run far." But is that true of churches? Is it possible for two churches to be "better together" than they might be separately? Our staffs and boards believe it is. Specifically, we believe that by joining Grand Haven Church of the Nazarene and The Lakes Community Church of the Nazarene into one church we will be more effective at reaching the unchurched population of the West Michigan lakeshore area and be better able to serve the needs of our own church communities. We are convinced that this will be a win for The Lakes, a win for Grand Haven Naz, and most importantly, a win for God's Kingdom.

Has the church board prayed about this?

- Yes. Pastor Aaron and Pastor Stephen have prayed about this for over a year. Our church board has been praying about this since the beginning of December of last year.

Why are we considering a merger?

- Both The Lakes and Grand Haven Naz have long histories, long histories of building God's kingdom. Together we are dreaming of a strong future as well. We believe joining together will help both congregations better fulfill their shared mission to reach our community for Christ. We also believe this is the leading of God and we want to honor that.

What is the vision behind this merger?

- The vision of this merger is to build upon the healthy, strong histories of both churches to multiply our effectiveness as we launch out to create a new church together. The vision will be part church merger (or church marriage), and part church planting effort (we recognize most people come to know Jesus in new churches). Even more than that, this endeavor is a big, bold vision to reach our community with the message of Jesus Christ. As we've considered laying down our individual church identities in favor of starting a new partnership together, we have taken personal inspiration from Jesus' words in John 12:24: "unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." We believe this new church will bear much fruit for God's kingdom.

What are the benefits of this proposed merger?

- The new church will launch with a combined service and a whole host of fun people from both churches who love Jesus and who are passionate about making an impact for the Kingdom of God. The new church will benefit from a strong combination of young and old, more dedicated volunteers serving together to effectively reach our community for Jesus, and additional financial resources.

Where?

Where will we meet?

- For this successful “marriage” to work we believe both local churches have to go “all in” just as any successful marriage requires both spouses to go all in. We are still praying that God will open up an opportunity for a building that is already built in the area near the mall for us to have a facility that will be “ours.” However, until that time we are able to rent the Fruitport Middle School Auditorium for an incredibly inexpensive fee.
- One of the possibilities is to purchase property and to then build a new church facility with the resources from the sell of both properties.***
- Over the summer we will have several gatherings throughout West Michigan with the intention of building connections between both The Lakes and Grand Haven.

Will we keep our buildings?

- If we move forward in this “marriage for the sake of the mission,” we will put both facilities up for sale. It is our hope that the resources from the sale would further the legacy of each church.
- When the fall comes the board will have to evaluate the best locations for various midweek gatherings. We don’t want to eliminate or declare any definitive answers yet. We believe in a God who opens doors that we do not yet see.

Who

Who will serve on the church board?

- The Manual of The Church of the Nazarene has some stipulations for how boards are elected. It will be the recommendation of the Grand Haven Board and of The Lakes Board to elect 5 people from each current board. Officially the “nominating committee” recommended by “**Crossbridge Church**” would elect the church board.

What will the governance of the church consist of?

- Many areas will be covered by the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene the rest will be handled by the church staff and new board of “**Crossbridge.**”
- Both churches have adopted the Carver Policy Governance Model for boards and have begun implementing that as the mode for our church boards. The model will be carried over to the joint church.

Will we keep our pastor? Staff?

- Yes. This is one of the great resources of both churches. Pastor Aaron and Pastor Stephen have worked out roles and will serve together as co-pastors for the first two years of the “marriage.” Following that two years, there will be an evaluation of the best way forward in terms of leadership. The rest of the pastoral staff will assume the same roles as a part of Crossbridge Church.

But what about...?

Will my life group still be able to meet?

- We hope so. Our hope is to always add more life groups.
- If my life group meets on Sunday morning will it still be able to meet then? That answer is also yes. We will be making arrangements for wherever we meet for life groups to meet on Sunday mornings.

What will happen to the “missionaries” and para-church ministries that we currently support?

- As long as finances allow, we will do our best to fund all missionaries and para-church ministries from both churches for the first year while we assess effectiveness and priorities going forward. (Which is what we currently do.)

What about our senior adults who cannot drive or young people who have the same issue?

- We will coordinate transportation for Sunday morning for all who need it. It will likely begin with an effort for organized carpooling, but may end up with the purchasing of a vehicle or two for the purpose of making sure all who want to be a part of this unique thing God is doing can be a part.

Who will lead music?

- There will be a meeting with the leaders of the music teams of both churches. In that meeting there will be an effort to collaborate and create “new teams.” We will maximize our strengths together!

What about our community garden(s)?

- Both Grand Haven and The Lakes have community gardens. We do not know specifically how the gardens will work out next year, but this year they will continue as normal. As long as people are still committed to having a garden for our community we will make sure that is always taken care of.

More information, please?

What if I have questions about all of this?

- Please attend the Town Hall Meetings, and/or submit your questions in the Question Box.
- Contact Pastor Aaron, church board members, or even the church pastoral staff. We want to all be on the same page.

What can I do to help bring about this church marriage?

- Pray. Attend the Town Hall Meetings and show your support. Continue to serve where you are serving or begin serving here and now.
- We are asking all of our people to answer the question “Is this reasonable and is God leading this?” Our boards have answered affirmatively to these questions. We are hopeful our congregations will as well.

What if?

What happens if one of the churches votes no?

- There will be no going further in terms of merger. There will however, be an evaluation of all ministries and models that currently exist. We believe God is calling us to bear much fruit and we want to do that the most effective way possible and this likely means changes from what we are currently doing.
- The vote must be a 2/3 favorable vote to pass. However, our board would need to evaluate how wise it would be to merge with a vote that does not have a percentage that is much higher than 2/3.

How?

How will we merge our finances and assets?

- There will be the necessity of hiring an attorney to lead us through the legalities.
- We will appoint a financial person who is not the current treasurer of either church and use them to audit and make sure all finances are correctly accounted for.

***On the next couple pages, you will see sample plans of what could be in terms of facility. These are not definitive plans, but options we may explore.

PLAN 26-518-MP

STATISTICS:
 AREA: (SQ.FT.)
 MAIN FLOOR 23,138
 SECOND FLOOR 879
 CANOPY 1,702
 TOTAL \$26,000

SEATING CAPACITY:
 MAIN FLOOR 518

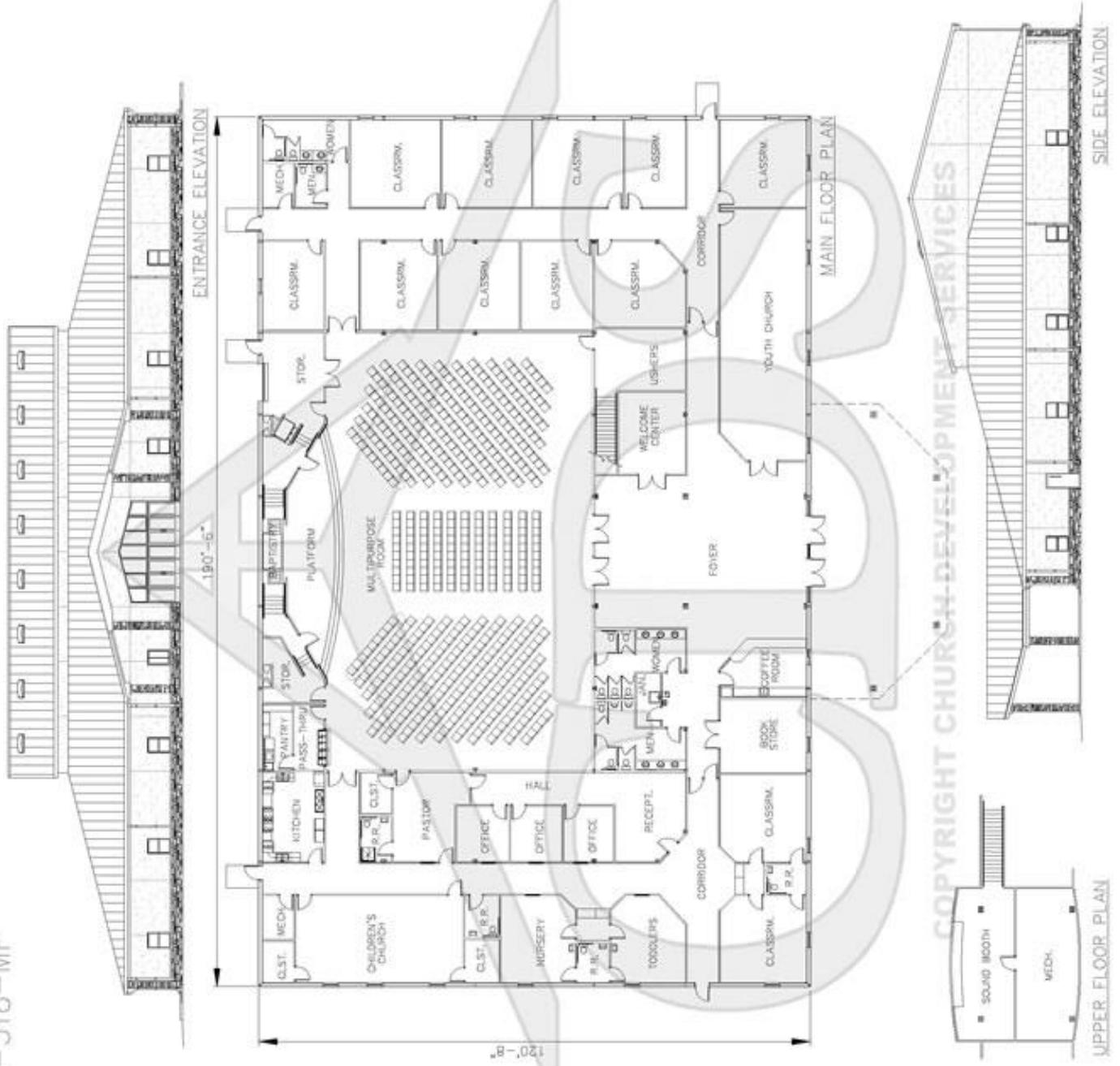
SCOPE:
 MULTIPURPOSE AREA WITH PLATFORM AND BAPTISTRY
 LARGE FOYER W/ COFFEE ROOM AND WELCOME CENTER
 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S CHURCH
 BOOK STORE
 12 CLASSROOMS
 NURSERY AND TODDLER'S AREA
 RECEPTION AREA WITH 3 OFFICES AND PASTOR'S OFFICE WITH PRIVATE LAVATORY
 KITCHEN WITH PANTRY
 BUILDING DATA:
 PRE-ENGINEERED STEEL EXTERIOR FINISHED WITH STONE AND EPS
 STANDING SEAM METAL ROOFING

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

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PLAN 26-656-SMP

STATISTICS:
 AREA: (SQ.FT.)
 MAIN FLR. 24,710
 PORCH 826
 TOTAL 4,28,000
 SEATING CAPACITY:
 MAIN FLOOR 638
 CHOR AREA 18
 TOTAL 656

SCOPE:
 SANCTUARY W/ FAN SHAPED SEATING
 CHANCEL AREA W/ MOVABLE CHOR CHAIRS
 WARMING KITCHEN
 5 OFFICES
 SECT / RECEPTION WITH WORK ROOM
 5 CLASSROOMS
 MOTHER'S ROOM
 LG MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

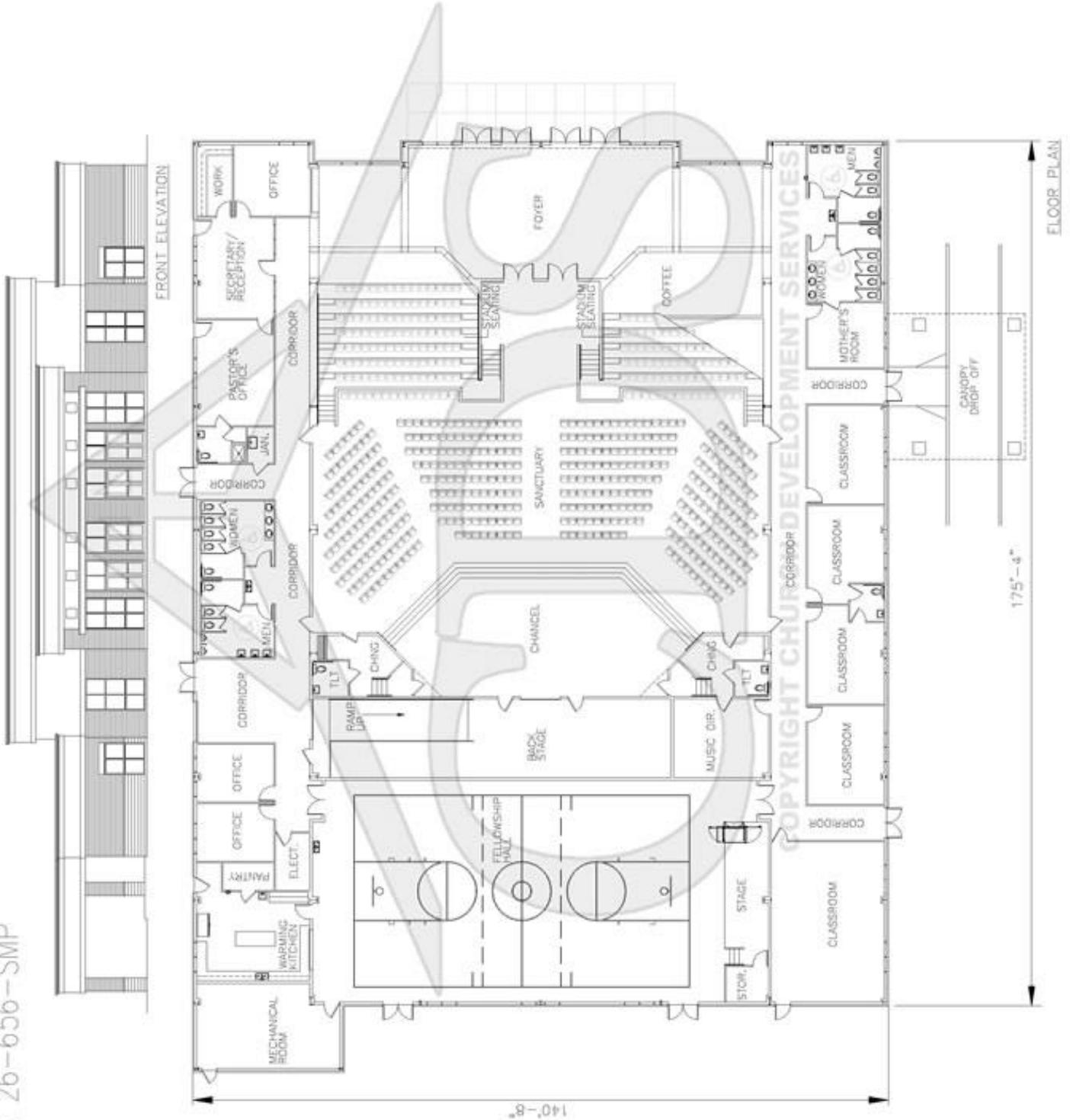
BUILDING DATA:
 PRE-ENGINEERED STEEL
 BRCK VENTFR, STORL, EPS SYSTEM AND MEMBRANE ROOF

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FLOOR PLAN