

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning CCVH

Why is a special meeting being called? The Membership of Christ Church is being asked to approve a bid for the Christ Lutheran Church building at 595 Deerpath Dr. in Vernon Hills. The Elders and Deacons have completed their due diligence and are recommending this purchase as the new home of the Christ Church Vernon Hills (“CCVH”) campus. In accordance with our Constitution and By-Laws, we are submitting this matter to a vote of the Membership. This meeting is being called to explain the proposal, field questions, discuss the proposal’s merits, and open voting.

How long will voting be open? Voting (in-person or electronic) will begin after the May 2nd meeting and be open until 5 PM on Saturday, May 8th. You must be a member to vote. If the motion is affirmed by 2/3 (or more) of a quorum of at least 25% of the Membership, it will pass.

Why are we doing this? We launched the Vernon Hills campus a year ago because we believe starting new churches is one of the best ways to reach people with the Gospel. We are recommending this purchase because it is a strategic and unique opportunity to move forward. This building (595 Deerpath Dr.) is one of the few buildings zoned to be a church in Vernon Hills and has been a long-standing community hub: the Vernon Hills parade starts at the church, it is adjacent to a park and within walking distance to the new library, new senior housing development, and the elementary and middle schools.

How will we fund this purchase? We raised the necessary funds to make this purchase during the REACH campaign. As you may remember, REACH had three objectives: 1) 100,000 volunteer hours; 2) 500 people baptized; and 3) Ten new churches – i.e., communities of grace, hope and love. Our stated goal was that six of these would be overseas, three would be Christ Church local campuses, and one would be in response to a unique need or opportunity. Christ Church Vernon Hills is one of the three local campuses.

Remind me, how and why did we decide on Vernon Hills? It seems as though people there could easily drive to one of our other campuses.

- Early in 2018, a Site Selection Team – comprised of a dozen members from the three existing campuses (Lake Forest (“CCLF”), Highland Park (“CCHP”) and Grayslake (“CCCR”)) - began praying and meeting to identify where the fourth campus should be located. After five months of work, they recommended Vernon Hills because: 1) It was underserved by churches; 2) Our research suggested many of the people there were looking for community; and 3) We had a number of long-time Christ Church members who had felt called to start a church in this area for some time. You can hear two of their stories, [here](#) and [here](#).
- In February of 2019, we hired Jonathan Neef to be the Campus Pastor for this new site. He immediately set to work establishing a launch team.

- In April of 2019, their newly forming launch team (then comprised of nine people) began holding weekly meetings. By April of 2020, the launch team had grown to forty people, and we leased the vacated Carson Pirie Scott building just north of Hawthorn Mall (located at 480 Ring Dr.) in preparation for an Easter launch. We were preparing to commission the launch team at the Genesee Theater on March 15 when COVID hit, and the launch was put on hold.
- During the late Spring and early Summer, Jonathan and his team continued to meet and pray (via Zoom). In August, the group began holding outdoor worship services in the parking lot of 480 Ring Dr. In September, they moved the services inside and began to grow.

Is the launch team doing well? Yes. While we would not recommend launching a church during a pandemic, CCVH has grown to 80 people during COVID with over 100 attending on Easter. Additionally, it has started a weekly Wednesday evening program of small groups, created a support group to reach out to parents in the community, partnered with the American Red Cross to host six community blood drives, served over 200 families via the “Food for Friends” program, and held a variety of outreach events, including a recent Easter Egg Hunt that drew over 200 people.

If its current location is working, why move? 480 Ring Dr. has been an ideal place to start. It is a spacious building near the mall and the monthly rent is reasonable. However, zoning laws prohibit this from being a long-term option, and we will need to relocate. We were exploring other leasing options when a leader from Christ Lutheran Church asked if we might be interested in buying their building. Having recently completed our due diligence on Christ Lutheran, we believe purchasing this facility is a unique opportunity and allows a long-term solution to our needs.

What is the cost of the building? Because Christ Lutheran Church will be receiving bids on the property, we do not want to name our offer in a public document. What we can say is that Elders and Deacons reviewed and unanimously approved the offer amount and structure.

What are the upsides of this site? There are several significant upsides to this property:

- Its Location: As mentioned earlier, 595 Deerpath Dr. is centrally located near the library, a pond, a park, a new senior center and two schools.
- Its Zoning: We believe the most significant upside is that this property is already a church. This takes away the significant obstacles we face if we try to locate elsewhere. (As an aside, communities are becoming less and less welcoming to churches, in part because they do not want to set aside any additional space to a tax-free entity.)
- The Price: If our offer is accepted, we believe this purchase is better than the leasing options we have identified. Our leasing options are less beneficial to us financially, and their locations are less appealing. (Note: We are making a cash offer.)

However, if we did take on a mortgage, at today's interest rates, it would be less than the expected monthly rent at any of our leasing options. And, at the end of 15 years, we would own a building.)

What are the downsides? Three concerns have been expressed about the building: 1) The facility is not as attractive as our other three sites; 2) It has a number of deferred maintenance issues; 3) It has a small sanctuary.

- While it is true this facility is not a landmark building, we feel it serves its community well.
- We have conducted a thorough overview of the building and are aware of the costs required to bring everything up to Christ Church standards – these costs are included in the bid amount and structure.
- Currently, the sanctuary will seat about 80-100 people. Because of the limited seating, we are prepared to implement additional services. The current sanctuary was designed in such a way to allow it to be expanded.

Is it necessary to buy at this time? Purchasing at this moment was not our plan, however when this option presented itself, we quickly saw the upsides in terms of outreach and stewardship of our current funds.

Why are we choosing Vernon Hills when The Orchard is already there? Given how “under-churched” Vernon Hills is (in part because of their uniquely challenging zoning laws), we are excited that The Orchard is there, and we hope and pray that other churches are established there as well.

If we purchase their building, will Christ Lutheran Church merge with us? No. The approximately forty members of the Christ Lutheran congregation have not decided if they will disband or continue to meet. Of course, their members would be welcome to join us, but this is not a merger.

Does the offer we plan to make obligate us in any way other than the purchase price? Yes, it does. Christ Lutheran Church has operated a premier preschool for thirty years, which has been a gift to many in the surrounding area. They are eager to keep it going and we are anxious for them to do so. To that end, we have not only agreed to allow them to remain in that space, but we have also said that we would help them market the school. Additionally, Trinity Grace, a Chinese American church, has been meeting at the facility on Saturdays. We have assured them of our openness to allow them to continue to use the building under their current arrangement.

What happens if we purchase this building, but the site fails? As the Book of Acts makes clear, expanding God's church is hard work, and it comes with no guarantees. However, we have been down this path before. We do not expect the Vernon Hills site to fail:

- When the Evangelical Church of Highland Park approached Christ Church in 2008 to see if we were interested in obtaining their property, they had fewer than 20 members. Today the campus hosts a Thursday evening service for young adults and three Sunday services (in addition to the 10 AM service, Rev. 7:9 has a growing noon service and Maranatha – a Spanish Language congregation - meets on Sunday evening). During this last year those attending this campus have partnered with the Illinois Food Bank to deliver food to up to 400 families per week.
- We can report similar results at the Crossroads campus, which merged with us in August 2014. Today CCCR holds two weekend services, has a thriving Awana program, and a number of care ministries.

The Vernon Hills launch is up and running. Contributions from this campus are ahead of our initial forecast.

Is CCVH financially independent of the other campuses? As you may remember, we adopted the multisite model ten years ago because it provides several unique advantages: 1) While less than 25% of church plants are still viable five years later, 85% of multisite campuses are still operating; 2) By acting as one church meeting in multiples locations, multisite campuses are able to reduce costs and leverage ministry. In many ways, new campuses have the advantages of being a small church while also having the advantages of being a large church. In terms of finances, we expect new sites to quickly cover their staffing and facilities costs. After a few years we expect them to be contributing additional funds towards all our central ministries – i.e., 5% to local missions; 5% to global missions; 5% to the multisite fund; 5% to capital accounts; and 10% towards central services. Both CCHP and CCCR are doing so, and we expect CCVH to do this in the future. At the moment, giving at the Vernon Hills campus is running ahead of our projections.

Are there plans for a fifth site? Since COVID required us to quickly develop an “online campus,” we are directing the resources raised for the fifth site in this direction. We do not have any immediate plans for a sixth site.

If the vote secures more than the required 2/3 of a 25% quorum, is this a done deal? No. As noted, Christ Lutheran Church is accepting other bids.

What will CCVH do if this option falls through? Failing to secure the facility will be a disappointment, but we will move forward.