



Couts United Methodist Church
802 North Elm
Weatherford, Texas 76086

Case Statement

Couts Memorial United Methodist Church

In the late 1990's and early 2000's, Cout's UMC was fulfilling its purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Attendance in Sunday School, small groups and worship were at their high water marks. Worship was averaging around 400 each Sunday. During this time the church considered many options as to how to continue to grow in making disciples of Jesus Christ. After much prayer and discussion, the decision was made to remain at this location and add on to the existing facilities. The addition included making the space entering the sanctuary larger and more welcoming. It included tearing down some buildings and adding the current education wing (this is where the nursery, offices and children's Sunday School are currently located.) The first floor was constructed with daycare standards in mind. The vision was to have a ministry with children and their families, and we have seen that take place with the continued growth of our school (Couts Christian Academy) along with tremendous space for our Children's ministry. We are seeing the vision come to be before our eyes in ways that we might not have seen in the beginning. God has used our church to make a difference in this community and the world.

Three months before the construction was completed, approximately 150 people left the church over multiple issues, one of which was the building project. The initial capital campaign was severely compromised, yet this church has continued to move forward, made difficult choices, and continued to make disciples while facing the financial struggles over the past 15 years. To date that initial 1.6 million dollar debt is down to \$962,920.28 as of the end of February 2016. With the current rate of 4.75% and a monthly payment of \$8,107.42, of which about 47% goes to interest, this debt will be paid off in May of 2029. We have had some families in recent months to donate above and beyond their regular donations by giving directly to reducing this debt. Thank You! However, this \$97,289.04 budget line item, or this 16.4% of our annual budget puts a limit on our current ministries and new ministries that we could be doing to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In May of 2015 the church conference voted to have a debt reduction campaign, trusting the Finance Committee and Church Council to choose the best way to proceed. They have done outstanding work in considering all options and now we are having Horizons conduct this feasibility study for our church.

Eliminating this debt would free up dollars for ministry. Cout's could be even more active in mission by responding to disasters, feeding hundreds of thousands of children through Kids Against Hunger, reaching out in ministries of mercy in the city of Weatherford, and continuing to grow closer to God by leading others in their discipleship journey. Everything mentioned above could build our impact in worship and in this community for many years to come.

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A puzzle has many pieces, and we are all a piece of the puzzle as God's presence is realized in the world. The people of Israel faced a daunting task when they were returning from Babylon after 70 years of exile. Jerusalem was in ruins as a result of the war and years of neglect. They were captives and did not have financial resources and yet God had secured a way for them to return to the promised land. They went back and experienced challenges in rebuilding the temple. One challenge is they quickly lost interest and soon were focused on building their own homes and businesses. After 15 years they refocused and in a period of 3 years rebuilt the temple. They eventually rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem and about 300 years later Jesus the Messiah was born. God's presence continues to come into this world and we as Christians and disciples of this church are all a part of something so much larger than what we see around us or what we see at this point in time. We do know that God's presence will continue to be realized in this world. We are responsible for our piece of the puzzle that continues to come into focus. We all can consider it a privilege and joy of leaving a legacy of faith, hope and love that God will use for many years to come. The people of Israel were asked to do their part. They were continually asked to give generously to support the temple, to help the poor, the sick and the lost, and Jesus asks us to grow in our relationship and commitment to him throughout our lives. We are called to be extravagant in one thing -- generosity.

The level of success in anything we do as the body of Christ is directly related to everyone participating and realizing the urgency of addressing this challenge right now. The current debt ties us back to a time when friends and family chose to worship elsewhere. Eliminating this debt will help heal the hurt and free us to do what God is calling us to do in this community. Children's stomachs will be filled. A family that faces the overwhelming feeling of losing everything in a disaster will see hope. People who find themselves down and out will find a beacon of hope and new life. Someone who has yet to know or experience God's grace and love will not only hear but also say yes to Jesus and have their lives changed forever. Who knows, your grandchild might be the next pastor ordained to lead God's people into the 22nd century. Your participation is important to God.