

“BRANCHING OUT”
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CASE STATEMENT ~ JANUARY 2014
BOWER HILL COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MOUNT LEBANON, PA

WHO WE ARE

Bower Hill Church is growing! In three years, attendance has increased by 30%. Newcomers represent all walks of life, but most are young families, attracted to the church's social-consciousness and mission focus. In 2010, we averaged nine kids at the children's sermon; today it's 30. We recently hired our first Director of Christian Education in a decade.

Our growth draws on deep roots planted by the faithful of generations past. They dreamed, sacrificed, and created a church that would end up marching on Selma, housing a Jewish congregation, and hiring one of the first female pastors in Pittsburgh. Bower Hill Church has a unique identity in this region. At this crucial period of new growth, our “unique identity” calls us to two important tasks:

- 1.) to invest our new vitality into sustained growth for the years ahead;
- 2.) to live faithfully into our role as “a social justice church” for today.

This is a joyful but daunting responsibility! In order to fulfill our calling to be Bower Hill Church today—the social justice church of the South Hills—we must address two pressing concerns: our aging building and our many mission commitments.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

We're branching out into God's good future. Our church's growth brings to mind Jesus' Parable of the Mustard Seed: “It is the tiniest of seeds...but it springs up into a large shrub, *and the birds of the air take shelter in its branches.*” Think of the shrub as Bower Hill Church: its ministries, its mission projects, and even its building, which has always been a tool for mission. A bird who “takes shelter in its branches” is any person who benefits from our church's life, and ministries, and physical plant.

In this period of growth, our shrub is branching out to provide shelter as nearby as our packed Sunday school classrooms and as faraway as our Haiti Water Projects. Our building is abuzz with daily activity: Scouting for boys and girls, a preschool for children with intellectual disabilities, a support group for parents who have lost a child, Alcoholics Anonymous, Bible studies, social events, and more. Countless birds take shelter in our branches—some of them quite literally, like the homeless families who live in our building several weeks each year. Our mission and ministries—“the shrub”—are branching out in ways we never expected. That's why the theme for our capital campaign is “Branching Out.”

WHAT WE NEED IN ORDER TO GET THERE

We need you. The Session is calling upon anyone whose life is made better by Bower Hill Church (all of us sheltering birds) to think prayerfully about ways we can cultivate a healthy, vibrant church for future generations. We cannot all give equal sums of money to a capital campaign, but we can all make equal sacrifices.

Here are concrete components of our vision:

STEEPLE REPAIRS

People build their lives around symbols. Our steeple is one of the tallest spires in the South Hills. It's our gift to this community, one of its oldest and most prominent landmarks. The steeple is our most public declaration of faith, speaking God's presence and beauty to all. We have received letters from strangers stating that they found hope by glimpsing our steeple during a personal crisis. But rescuing it from decades of neglect will cost **\$180,000.**

A GREENER, MORE ECONOMICAL BUILDING

Each spring, we breathe a thankful prayer that our old boilers have lasted another winter. But they won't last much longer. In order to provide a safe, comfortable atmosphere for the growing number of churchgoers, especially children, and in order to be better stewards of the earth, we urgently need to replace our old boilers

with cleaner, more cost-effective furnaces for **\$105,000**. Energy efficient windows are also needed throughout the building for **\$115,000**. These amounts will be recuperated in energy savings, and utility costs will be greatly reduced for future years.

A SAFER, MORE ACCESSIBLE CAMPUS

There are few rooms in Mt. Lebanon as spacious and open as our Fellowship Hall, but it is in need of complete renovation, especially the buckling parquet floors, for **\$35,000**. Our parking lots have not been repaved since they were installed; they too represent a safety concern, but can be repaired for **\$50,000**. Our playground is currently very “high maintenance,” but in warm weather, it is used by many children each day. It could be made safer, more fun, and easier to maintain for **\$15,000**.

OUR MISSION PROJECTS

We continue to believe that our building is primarily a tool for mission—part of the shrub that shelters us birds. Mission is central to our vision. For that reason, we intend to pay “a tithe” (10% of any amount we collect, but not to exceed **\$50,000**) to be distributed equally between two local and two foreign missions: South Hills Interfaith Ministries, Family Promise, Hekima Place, and our Haiti Water Purification Projects.

MEDIA INITIATIVE AND OUTREACH

Another form of mission is simply letting people know “where we are” and “what we are about.” Some call this “evangelism.” It will require new Internet and social media initiatives. Creative use of technology and advertizing is especially necessary for a church that is not visible from the main roadways, like ours. Such an undertaking will cost **\$15,000**.

Campaign costs amount to **\$35,000**. In all, we need **\$600,000**.

THE BIRDS OF THE AIR

The world needs—and longs for—our kind of faith. John Muir said, “We all receive more than we ever give.” The faithful of generations past sacrificed in order to build Bower Hill Church from the ground up. But before making sacrifices, they dreamed of a world that ought to be; they dreamed of the kind of church that would help to bring about such a world. They dreamed and built, then handed their dreams over freely to you and me. What will we leave to the youngsters—those little birds—who flock to our children's sermon each week?

The seed has been planted. The branches have spread further than any of us could have expected. Now ours is the joyful task of dreaming and cultivating this unruly, unpredictable shrub that God has sown in our lives, so that it might offer shelter for generations to come. All our clearest thinking, and our best doing, and our wisest dreaming begins with prayer. The Session invites you to start not by looking at your bank account, but by simply breathing this prayer regularly and often:

*“Lord, what would you do through me to accomplish your vision for Bower Hill Community Church?
Help me to discern a sacrifice for our capital campaign that is meaningful and joyful. Amen.”*