

Report on North Chapel Facilities Planning

There's been a lot happening since our last report.

On Monday, 20 March, Gina Auriema, Robert Black, Anne Dean, Veronica Delay, Geraldine Fowler, Mary Hawkins, Ann Wynia, and I will gather to review the draft of a report to the board and the community. It summarizes our recommendations, including a four-phase approach to renovations. Jack Nelson and Angel Rubino can't attend this meeting, but I will share the report with them and add any input they have to it.

I don't believe that there will be any big surprises contained in the report. But here are some things I'd like the board to know about it:

1. In general, the work outlined in the report falls into several key categories: preservation of our historic building; addressing energy conservation; and enhancing interior spaces for SE, meditation, and small-group activities. Although some of the work to accomplish each of these objectives is inter-dependent, the work can be done in phases; some parts could be delayed or simply not done. Tasks are ranked in order of importance and urgency; phases 1 and 2 both address moisture and health issues in the lower level.

In brief, they are:

- Phase 1 focuses on exterior work needed to prevent water from entering the northeast corner of the building at the foyer and to channel the water into the river through the back yard. We'd also remediate water damage to the interior of the building in that area.
- Phase 2 focuses on the Chapel, SE Room, and lower level, addressing moisture and insulation issues there and underneath Geraldine's office. Some fairly simple renovations to the Chapel and SE Room would make them better-adapted to programs in each area.
- Phase 3 focuses on repairing the roof over the Offices and Parlors and repairing the damaged flashing and clapboard behind the Sanctuary. [As discussed at the Annual Meeting, we'll submit a grant application to the Preservation Trust of Vermont for funds to support this work.]
- Phase 4 focuses on the Offices and Parlors, reconfiguring rooms and addressing insulation and soundproofing.

2. We can anticipate that the big-ticket items will be those addressing the historic preservation and health issues and making our building more energy-efficient; the changes we're making to support programming are relatively minor in the scope of the entire project.

3. We can make progress toward the community's commitment to achieve carbon-neutrality by 2020 through some of the work outlined in the plan. But it's important to point out that one of the recommendations we will make is for the North Chapel to establish a separate task force to explore and develop a plan for how we can realistically meet that goal. Many of the big steps we might have taken to do this (for example, installing solar panels) aren't options for our property, and it's become clear that we need to think more holistically and more creatively about how we accomplish our energy-use objectives. For example, at the October workshop Robert Black pointed out that in order to meet their own goals of being a greener church, a congregation he worked with in Ann Arbor instituted a ride-sharing program and counted the savings in gas it achieved toward their goals. We'll need to think about similar kinds of ideas in order to meet ours.

4. Gina is talking to contractors and getting estimates on the work outlined in the report. Understandably, this is time-consuming and challenging, but she's trying to complete these conversations and obtain the estimates as soon as possible. [I am incredibly grateful for all the work that Buildings & Grounds does and for Gina's initiative, in particular.] After next week, the report will be complete except for these construction cost estimates.

5. I'm sure that you'll want to talk about how to get the recommendations out in front of the community. I believe that we could schedule some information meetings, Quest article, etc., now without having the final construction estimates in hand.

respectfully submitted,

Michael Stoner