

Parking Lot and Building Addition Update, November 2020

Though there has been no visible change at the church property, the renovation project is proceeding with lots going on in the background. Of course, everyone is anxious to see heavy equipment move in, but the site development has required considerable input and adjustment from a number of sources. In addition to a complicated site plan—to be expected when you are building on a steep slope in Haywood County—there are other many moving parts in play which have caused unforeseen delays.

Initially, the plan was to coordinate our site development with the NCDOT widening of Walnut Street. Since that project has been moved back a couple of years, we have had to renegotiate the movement of utilities and redesign some of the drainage in order to do everything correctly “up front” and connect properly later without tearing anything back up when the DOT does their work, which is now slated for 2023. We have just about concluded all the extra planning and negotiations with many parties, including Charter Communications, AT&T, the Town of Waynesville, Haywood County, and the NCDOT. The good news is that the engineering site plan, which the committee approved in July, is complete and has been approved by the town. The bids for site work are back, and everything is ready to start when some final paperwork is done. Once the actual grading and filling starts, it will take 60-70 days to level the site and build the retaining wall, at which point we can start work on the building itself.

The committee approved the final layout for the addition at its November 10 meeting. This includes the new elevator and entry lobby, an 8 foot high covered drive with handicapped access to the door, a handicapped accessible bathroom on the lower floor adjacent to the elevator lobby, a multipurpose room over the portico, and renovation of the space in the rear of the chancel (where old organ pipes were removed last year) to widen the hallway that the choir uses and to provide two storage closets there. Based on this, the architects are nearly finished with their design drawings. The completed drawings are on track to go out for bids and construction can then start as soon as the site work is done, presumably by early spring. Construction should take 4-5 months from then. Luckily, the elevator and building addition work is not contingent on approval and planning from so many outside sources and should be completed on a much smoother timeline than the site planning has been.

We look forward to the summer of next year when we will (hopefully) worship together in person, and when **everyone** can get to and around our building safely—thanks to plentiful level adjacent parking and a brand-new elevator!