

REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION – May 2, 2021

Rick Croskery, Project Team chair

Good morning. It is so good to see everyone here; I want to welcome everyone watching online as well. *Friends, the winter is over, and spring has come!*

It has been a little over a year since the session approved, and this church commissioned, a team to develop and oversee the transformative project of providing plentiful safe parking and elevator access so that all our members and guests can participate fully in the life of this wonderful church. We cleverly named this “the Elevator and Parking Project”.

Though we have indeed been through all the seasons, in many ways it has seemed like the project was stuck in winter till now. The beginning stages were slowed by COVID, especially the planning and permitting. The DOT delay of widening Walnut street necessitated re-planning some of the work that was to have been done in conjunction with that. As the site work proceeded, the subterranean infrastructure of old drainage and utility lines was found to be improper or nonfunctional, requiring rerouting and replacement. A boggy area that had never drained properly had to be remediated. An old trash dump was discovered and removed. And the rain! Days were lost, not just because of rain or snow, at times because the soil moisture content was far too high to support heavy equipment.

Through it all, the work has been done well and it has been done right. If you venture out back, you will see our new parking area. It is nearly ready to be paved, but we will wait until after the part of construction requiring heavy equipment is completed to do so, probably late this summer.

And so, it is spring! We are to start on the actual building, which will consist of a covered drive adjacent to the entrance to a new elevator lobby. This will open into our lower hallway. Walking one way will lead you to our staircase, the other will lead to the parlor. In front of the parlor foyer, and behind the elevator room will be a new handicapped accessible restroom. Upstairs, what is now the first hallway window will be a door into the elevator lobby. The window in the back of the Heritage room will become a door to a new 500 square foot multipurpose room that sits above the covered drive. The door to the back hallway that the choir uses and the hallway itself will be widened, and new storage areas are to be built in the rear of the chancel where the old organ pipes were.

This month, we will pour the concrete footings and foundation for the new parts of the building. The new foundation will be independent from the old one, so that we will not dig near or disturb it. We will essentially be building a new box right up against the current building, and forming doorways between them. Much of the construction can be accomplished without disruption of our usual activities. The estimated completion date for construction has been moved back to the end of this year or early 2022.

For those of you so inclined, the architectural drawings are on the table in the library and may be viewed at your leisure.

What is now the back of our church is going to be the main entry for most people and a new focal point. We aim to make it beautiful and practical. We hope to brighten and beautify the entire lower level of the church. There is an opportunity to reorganize our storage and possibly re-purpose some rooms. Many ideas have been suggested, but no specific recommendations have been made. This work will be done in the coming months by the Building and Grounds Committee, who will present any recommended changes in building use to the session for deliberation.

Finally, the cost of the project, estimated at \$1.25M last summer (including the new multipurpose room), has grown to right at \$1.5M now. This is primarily due to the increased amount of site development and the marked increase in the price of building materials since COVID. We will continue to work with the contractor to reduce costs, and in fact have already reduced it by about \$130,000.

The church had already set aside monies for this project in addition to the generous \$1M gift we received. We are now in the process of raising the remainder needed. I thank you for the generous pledges we have already received.

I want to recognize the Elevator Parking Project Team—if you are here, stand. They are Hughes Roberts, Mike McKinney, Van Davis, and Bo Prevost. Thanks for your work. In addition, Hughes has put together a financing team consisting of Nancy Thompson, Marti Peithman, Larry Oakley, and Mike McKinney. Do not hesitate to contact me or one of these fine people with your questions or ideas.

This is a beautiful, important, and transformational project for our church. God has blessed us richly in its conception and development. I know we will benefit from it and it will be worth the wait!

Thank you.