

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MODERATOR

December 15, 2017

Dear Fellow Church Members and Friends,

We write to you in the season of Advent, the period of waiting, reflection, hope, and prayer, as we anticipate celebrating on Christmas Eve the birth of Jesus. It is a season of joy for some, of sorrow or anxiety for others. It is a season of music and laughter and gift-giving, but also of worry and fear. Most of all, it is a time for our church community to join together in sharing all of these complicated and conflicting emotions and feelings. We are giving gifts to struggling families in greater Boston. We are giving support in the form of prayer, visitation, soup, and flowers to families in our own congregation who are struggling with difficulties of all sorts. We hope that you, as individuals and families are feeling yourselves a part of the rich community that we offer. Let us know how you can help; let us (or your ministers) know what you might need.

We are wrapping up the 2017 Stewardship campaign that will fund the activities and commitments of the church in 2018. We have nearly reached our goal of \$900,000 but we are not there yet. If you are intending to pledge but have not yet done so, please do it as soon as possible. It is very difficult to plan for 2018 without a clear and definitive understanding of what resources will be available for the year. Your stewards will thank you immensely!

In the coming month the support board chairs, stewards, and church council members will be working closely with our church staff to assemble the operating budget for next year. The budget will be available for your review a week or so prior to the annual meeting, at which, following discussion and prayer, you will be asked to vote on the budget for 2018. **SAVE THE DATE of January 28, 2018 for the annual meeting**, in the sanctuary right after worship.

You may recall from our “message” to you in September that church leadership was engaged in a study to assess and document the existing infrastructure conditions in the church and parish house. The study, aptly called a Facilities Condition Assessment Plan (FCAP), is nearly complete. Some of the major findings of the study are as follows:

- The building is in good condition but the interior is “tired”
- HVAC (Heating, ventilation, air conditioning) issues represent the biggest challenge
- The roof appears to be in good condition following repairs
- Lighting and electrical systems need to be updated
- Site sanitary and storm systems are problematic
- Several regulatory (building code) issues remain.

The study categorized the infrastructure needs as High Priority, Important, or Deferrable. High Priority projects are those that the FCAP recommends be addressed within 3 years. The total estimated cost of addressing those High Priority projects is nearly \$2.0 million. The total for all projects is over \$3.0 million. Clearly, we need to spend a good sum of money just to restore the building systems we already have in place.

The next step in our building assessment process is preparation of a church Master Plan. The Master Plan will build upon the findings and recommendations of the FCAP report. An essential part of preparing a Master Plan will be to get important input from you, the church community, about what the buildings need going forward to facilitate the many missions of our church.

We expect that the final FCAP report will be available for your review early in January. We urge you to read the report, consider the primary issues going forward, and think about what you believe the church buildings ought to be and do in order for us to do our best work as Christians in a large and increasingly complicated world.

The FCAP team (Judy Nitsch, Betty & Herb Ule, Tia Pinney, Matt Wooster, Cynthia Gordan, and the 3 of us) has reviewed a proposal for master plan design services from Context Architecture. We anticipate going forward with the Context team in early 2018. We look forward to a lively discussion of the FCAP report at the Annual Meeting, followed by a series of “user group” meetings with many of you as we commence the master planning process.

Lastly, we want to invite participation of church members with specific interest and experience in building restoration and construction fields: architecture; civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering; interior design; site work; and development. We have LOTS of work to do, and we want to involve as many of you as possible. Let us know how you can contribute!

Faithfully,

Janeen S. Hansen, Moderator
Linda Thomas, Moderator Emerita
Gintas Vildzius, Rising Moderator