

PLYMOUTH CHURCH

14 December, 2021

Dear Plymouth Congregation,

We hope this letter finds you well and that you are having a joyous start to this Advent season. Despite the challenges this year has brought, there is much to celebrate--another successful start of school, new activities with our mission partners, an open and vibrant continuation of our children and youth programs, an exciting event line-up for Advent, and much more.

Part of 2021's success has been the significant strides made on our much-awaited *Spirit At Work* renovation, for which Council and our Design Task Force are proud to give a joint update. This letter includes:

- A **brief recap** of the Spirit At Work progress since 2019
- The general **Covid impact on renovations**, materials acquisition and contractors
- The **next steps** for building improvements

SYNOPSIS: 2019 TO DATE

For those of you who are new to Plymouth, our *Spirit At Work* capital campaign took place in 2019 with the goal of raising \$2 million for essential capital renovations spanning the Gym, Hillis Hall, the Sanctuary and assorted infrastructural components. Thanks to your tremendous generosity, we more than doubled our goal and received more than \$4 million in pledges.

You may see the full list of donors here: <http://www.plymouthchurch.org/thespiritatwork>

DESIGN TASK FORCE APPOINTED

Appointed by Council in 2019, the Design Task Force is composed of lay leaders that span Council and the Finance Committee, members who are architects by profession, Plymouth Staff, and Plymouth's Owner's Representative. All of these folks bring vast renovation and project management experience, and will lead the day-to-day project execution. The Design Task Force members who were appointed are as follows (in alphabetical order):

- Amy Anderson, *Director of Operations*
- Sal Barbieri, *Plymouth Church Owner's Representative*
- Jona Brisske (**architect** by profession)
- Sandra Deming, *Treasurer*
- Phil Hogue, Council member (replacing Hannah Robertson who served 2019-2021)
- James Koster (**architect** by profession)
- Molly Anna Martínez, *Executive Administrator*
- Brett Younger, *Senior Minister*

With the Design Task Force in place, Council tasked them with the following:

- **Gathering the congregational priorities** for the renovation in Fall 2018 via a congregation-wide survey;
- **Selecting the architecture firm** Fenniman Architects after a review of numerous top firms in part based on their achievements with houses of worship that are historic landmarks;

- **Guiding the architecture firm through the renovation process** with updates and approvals by Council to ensure good governance and that the ultimate design met our congregation's needs.

FENNIMAN ARCHITECTS

After months of vetting, the Design Task Force selected **Fenniman Architects** in June 2019. The Fenniman team has unparalleled expertise, particularly as it pertains to renovations of houses of worship which are historic landmarks. These renovations include:

- 4th Universalist Church (160 Central Park West)
- Chapel of the Good Shepherd (Roosevelt Island)
- Christ Church United Methodist (524 Park Ave.)
- Church of St. Francis Xavier (W.16th St.)
- St. Bernard's Church (W.14th St.)
- St. Michael's Church (W.99th St.)
- Temple Ansche Chesed (W.100th St.)
- Temple Ramath Orah (W.110th St.)

With a scope of work and an architecture team in place, the Design Task Force moved forward guided by this statement that inspired our *Spirit At Work* capital campaign:

“We are raising money not just for the building, but for what happens in the building; not just for ourselves, but for those who need a church like Plymouth; not just for the congregation that gathers today, but for the next generation of Plymouth.”

~ Brett Younger

2020: A COMPREHENSIVE PROPOSAL... THEN, COVID.

Leading up to March 2020, the Fenniman team studied the campus and assembled a thoughtful and comprehensive plan to carry out the congregational priorities spanning the Gym, Hillis Hall, the Sanctuary, and more.

On March 12, 2020, we had to temporarily limit access to the campus through July 5, 2020 due to a statewide lock-down as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

What did this mean for the renovation?

Essentially, our timeline was set back by at least six months due to a confluence of events out of our control, such as:

- Limited contractor availability for assessments.
- Drastic turnover / changes in the contractor landscape;
- Raw materials access;
- Manufacturing delays;

Nonetheless, significant strides were made during the course of the pandemic.

You may **read the comprehensive November 2020 Design Task Force update here** : https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57196c3040261d6de4b30c18/t/5fb433f43599b527ae968f6b/1605645300348/DTF_Letter_to_Plymouth_11-04-2020.pdf

In Spring 2021, the Design Task Force provided an additional congregational update via a Zoom Town Hall held on May 12, 2021, as well as a detailed report during the May 16, 2021 Annual Meeting.

If you were not able to attend the Town Hall nor the Annual Meeting, we encourage you to **watch the recording of the Design Task Force May 16, 2020 update here** :

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

In short, we are finally leading up to Phase 1.

Why Phases?

- The comprehensive Master Plan is broad both in scope of work and funding requirements. This complex plan can be divided into multiple, manageable projects.
- Our infrastructural needs are many and spread across all buildings of our campus
- Our funds will cover the first several phases and lay the foundation for future upgrades.
- For the health of our church and our school, it is more advantageous to carry out a large-scale renovation in phases rather than shutting down the entire facility for an indeterminate period of time.

Guiding Principles

Given a campus with the breadth of almost a city block, narrowing down the list of projects was no small task. From our long list of congregational hopes and dreams, the Design Task Force centered around the following guiding principles:

Balance. A balance of enhancements in both what we **see** (i.e., light fixtures, finishes) as well as what we **don't see** (i.e., electrical wiring, plumbing). The former cannot be successful without the latter;

Welcome. Hospitality and inclusion are central to our faith and Plymouth's history. All potential designs and enhancements were studied with welcome in mind and considering the impact for persons of all ages, range of disabilities, and needs of our members, school, missions partners, and community at large.

Fund Allocation as outlined in the Campaign Goals: Based on preliminary 2019 estimates as per the donor appeal presentations, *Spirit At Work* funds would be distributed approximately as follows:

- 50% Hillis Hall
- 25% Sanctuary
- 25% Gym

This approximate allocation, as laid out in the campaign, serves as the financial anchor to ensure the project priorities are met and how your generous contributions are spent.

PHASE 1 PROJECTS

Gymnasium (65 Hicks St.)

Scope of Work

- Replace Gym floor;
- Add two (2) bathrooms just outside Gym entrance via Hicks Street (currently there is only one restroom).

Why do this?

- The Gym is one of our most used spaces for the church and the school. More restrooms are essential for both daily use and for renters;
- The gym floor is beyond repair and currently constrained to light usage due to its delicate nature.

Restroom in Lobby (75 Hicks St.)

Scope of Work

- Add a restroom in the Church House Lobby Hallway in the closet opposite the current pantry;
- Water conduit to the bathroom comes through the basement;
- Add backflow preventer for water service and reconfigure storage in basement under stairs;
- Renovate pantry; add oven (no stovetop).

Why do this?

- Improves usage of the Reception Room for ourselves and for renters.
- The existing pantry would be more usable for our own functions, for caterers, and for the school.

PHASE 2 PROJECTS

Hillis Hall

Scope of Work

- Windows: replace exterior facing stained-glass windows with rectangular, clear thermopane windows in concert with the historic original window design at the building's inception. To get a view of our original 19th century windows, they are still preserved in the upper floor of Hillis Hall as seen from Cranberry St. (Work is underway to determine a solution to store and/or re-locate windows for historic preservation);
- Relocate the kitchen to the SE corner of Hillis Hall with a similar footprint and enhanced amenities. This will allow for more light and ventilation in the room, greater ease of load-in / load-out for supplies, and a clear path to the playground directly from Hillis Hall;
- Upgrade bathroom plumbing and fixtures with more ADA accessibility.

Why do this?

- To ensure Hillis Hall remains our main meeting area, we must meet Public Assembly code. Unfortunately, our infrastructure (ventilation, heating, plumbing, electrical systems) are gravely outdated and must be modernized.
- Ventilation is a core component of re-opening Hillis Hall or a public health perspective and the kitchen.
- Additional bathrooms with ADA accessibility are integral to welcoming members, renters, and visitors alike of all ages and abilities.

Sanctuary

Scope of Work

- Upgrade electrical system, including rewiring the chandelier;
- Upgrade sound system: move console from back of sanctuary floor to balcony;
- Restoration of distressed pews;
- Removal of select pews for persons who use wheelchairs and ease of bottleneck in Narthex and towards Hillis Hall entrance.

Why do this?

- The electrical system in the sanctuary is overburdened and does not accommodate any expansion of today's video and sound needs. We turn lights on/off by breakers, not switches, which is extremely dangerous and presents a potential fire hazard.
- The center chandelier could be a fire hazard with its cloth-covered wires and wooden plugs.
- Currently there is no accommodation for persons with disabilities. The project includes the removal of select pews, which will enable a greater diversity of people of all ages and abilities, as well as ease bottlenecks in the north and south entrances of the sanctuary.

HISTORIC CONSIDERATIONS: Looking Forward by Looking Back

We want a campus that is strong and sturdy for generations to come with proper 21st century enhancements. However, we are also a historic landmark. Central to these

changes is balancing historic preservation. We cherish the look and feel of our campus, and the history that lies within it.

We are blessed to be working with the Fenniman Architects team who specialize in renovations of historic houses of worship. We appreciate the long and thoughtful archival research done by the Fenniman team to get to this point and compose a renovation process that integrates our congregational needs in a way that is also historically grounded.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Due to the current pandemic-related challenges and delays in the construction industry, we are still awaiting bids on the Phase 1 Projects described above.

When those details come through, the Design Task Force will provide a more detailed congregational update, likely between Jan-Feb 2022. This update will include information such as project costs, timeline, and more. It will give you an opportunity to see blueprints, provide input, and ask questions.

YOUR SPIRIT AT WORK PLEDGE

The above scope of work will only be possible if you complete your pledge. We thank you in advance for your commitment to strengthening our Plymouth campus for the years ahead.

If you are not currently a Spirit At Work donor and would like to make a capital campaign pledge, you may do so here: <https://www.givecentral.org/appeals-form-registration/acp5d5db7c559d9d/user/guest>

Every little bit counts.

Thank you for your commitment to Plymouth and have a blessed Advent season.

Boyd Johnson, *Plymouth Church Council President*

Sandra Deming, *Plymouth Design Task Force*

Plymouth Church | plymouthchurch.org

