

As many of you hopefully know by now, First Parish is planning to conduct a Capital Campaign next spring. I am taking this time to provide a brief update and overview of the effort and intentions behind this campaign, and how it aligns with our overall vision for First Parish.

The meeting house is the physical home of our spiritual community. Many of us come here on Sunday mornings, or first Friday evenings, or Wednesday afternoons expecting this building to shelter us, keep us warm in the winter and cool in the summer. The church is a literal space that gives us a spiritual space and a space to build community. It is a space to be reminded of our shared values, encouraging us to be the change we want to see in the world. From weekly protests, to providing shelter to immigrants, from environmental advocacy at the State House, to supporting our community, this building is here to help us make those things happen.

And we need to take care of this building so it can take care of us.

The major issues we are trying to address include:

- Replacement of our end-of-life HVAC units that condition the addition. These are now 25 years old. One failed abruptly last winter and replacement parts were not available. This is New England. We need heat.
- Thorough repairs to the sprinkler system which protects the building in the event of fire, but also unfortunately puts the building at some level of risk due to the leaks in the system. These leaks can ultimately depressurize the sprinkler lines leading to water coming out. Currently the system is repressurized with an electric powered compressor.
- An emergency backup electric system to ensure critical infrastructure works in the event of a power failure.

- Revisiting the egress at the rear of the Common Room to consider more accessible options.
- Major Organ Maintenance and repairs to support the continued use and enjoyment of this historic instrument. This is a once every 50-years type of maintenance, so we should be good for a while.
- Various general improvements to the church including:
 - replacing the gas range in the kitchen with an electric range or cooktop,
 - sound proofing Maria's room to improve privacy of our guests and reduce impacts on the office below
 - replace remaining CFL light fixtures in the addition with LED lights

Making these improvements to our building will also free up our staff and volunteers from needing to respond to urgent repairs and allow them to focus on our goals around growth and community outreach.

In order to get from here to there, we are relying on some professional help.

Sara Green from Stewardship for Us visited for a weekend in September to meet in person with various stakeholders, the board, and the congregation at large. She has also met several times with the Capital Campaign committee and will continue to do so. Her job is to support us in assessing our readiness for such a campaign, and in helping to determine a realistic financial goal. Sara reflected back a number of strengths including our clear commitment as a community to one another. She will be back in a few weeks to meet with a representative sample of the church in one-on-one interviews. These interviews will inform her analysis of our ability to support a capital campaign.

We are also beginning to work with GreenerU, a consultant that works mostly with non-profit organizations who want to make progress towards

decarbonizing their spaces. Decarbonization in this context means reducing energy demands and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. To that end, they will be looking at our infrastructure, to establish a baseline of where we are now with regards to carbon emissions and energy use, and help us understand where we can do better.

The new HVAC units for the addition will be a major part of that analysis. Their scope of work will include feasibility review and preliminary budgets for several options, availability of incentives or rebates, estimated time frames for installation, and high-level impact on energy use and greenhouse house emissions. We hope that their work will help us come to a solution that will maximize our return on investment – meaning getting the biggest carbon emissions reduction for the buck.

We had an initial kick-off meeting with them on Friday, and they will begin data collection shortly. By the end of January, their study will be complete and they have offered to share their findings in a zoom presentation with the congregation. This will be recorded and available to parishioners.

Based on these consultants' efforts, we will recommend a campaign target to the board for their approval. There will then be a special parish meeting in early February. At that time, we will ask for your support in this endeavor.

Meanwhile, please join us next Sunday after the service for a more detailed discussion of the projects under consideration.