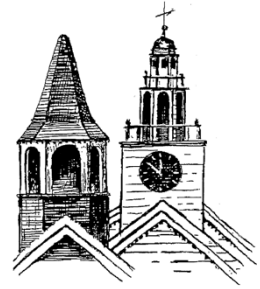


July 15, 2020

Dear Members of Church on the Hill,

I am writing to ask you to come to a congregational meeting and vote on Sunday, August 9, 2020. We will gather at our 11 AM outdoor worship service to address a proposal that we spend from our Physical Assets Endowment for Master Planning regarding our meetinghouse and chapel, to make our spaces useful and accessible to each and all, our whole church and wider community. (Rain date: Sunday, August 16, 2020.)



Master Planning will gain us insight into the current state of our buildings—their physical integrity and needs, as well as their current and future suitability for the worship life of the congregation, the administration of the church, and our entire ministry as serves Lenox and beyond for the sake of the good news of the living God.

As you know, we have awe-inspiring buildings in our care. They're iconic and important. They're also a huge responsibility for this small congregation. Especially given the recent loss of several people who devoted much of their time in stewardship of them, we each bear the weight of responsibility all the more.

But what a blessing they are as well—and could be in even greater ways.

I've told this story to many of you already: as people have learned of my call to serve as your pastor, a most frequent response I hear is this, "Church on the Hill! That's such a beautiful building. I've never been inside." I would love to see that change—that people *will* have been inside, both the meetinghouse and the chapel; and that they look forward to the next occasion when they will be again. For a lecture, a concert, an art installation, a school "moving up" or graduation, a theatrical performance, a book club discussion, a debate series on current events, a family reunion, a spiritual retreat, a youth group mission trip destination, a cooking and nutrition class, a children's play group, an after-school teen study cafe: these could be a resource to so much upbuilding of community, as the Holy Spirit alive and among us would have be so.

To make all this possible, though, we need a clear vision and strategic plan. How exactly do we create spaces that are conducive to lively community, and that reaffirm our historical partnership with our lovely town and county? How should we prioritize and properly order what needs to be done? How will we fund it?

This is where an architect and a grant writer come in.

The 251st Year Committee gathered first in January—Emily Johnson, Ellen Merritt, and Walton Wilson. Since then, they've been steadily searching for people with whom to work on these twin tasks of master planning and financial development. They decided upon James Hundt of [Foresight Architects](#) in Schenectady, NY, and Eileen Mahoney of Tyringham. Jim has worked for 40 years

specializing in the historic preservation and liturgical renewal of churches. Eileen has worked in development and grant writing for 30 years, with an emphasis on historic preservation. Most recently, she managed a capital campaign for Trinity Church, Lenox, raising \$700,000, \$263,000 of which was in grants. Together, the cost of hiring them to work with us would be \$66,000.

The 251st Year Committee presented these two proposals to the Trustees, Ann Trabulsi and Ticki Winsor, who approved it. Next came a presentation to the Parish Council, who realized that spending more than 4% from the Financial Assets Fund in any given year requires a congregational vote. So, the question now comes to you: do you approve spending from the Physical Assets Funds in the amount of up to \$66,000 over the next year?

It's a big question. To me, personally, it feels formidable, but also energizing. There's a lot at stake, not least the very life of the congregation—and not just in the long term. Things have been difficult here. Church on the Hill has, over the last couple of decades, suffered slow decline. More recently, there's been quite drastic loss. It's not an overstatement to say that, without a bold move made in faith, we could face closure within the next two years. This is itself a costly financial endeavor and would leave our two buildings to a fate none of the stakeholders in church or town would want.

That said, it's imperative to recognize we've also recently come into new gifts, which make possible real renewal. We are charged with a powerful, daunting mission. 250 years of serving the gospel of Jesus Christ in this place comes down to us as weighty responsibility, and, by grace, a true joy.

Please pray on this question. Please also be in touch with me, as I would be more than pleased to hear your questions, concerns, or enthusiasm. You could also reach out to any of the people mentioned in this letter. I am most easily reached by email (liz@goodman.md) or by phone (413-329-3026). Others mentioned can be found in the church phone book.

If you can't come to the meeting, you might consider voting by proxy by being in touch with me or Barbara Sims to discuss and cast your vote.

Faithfully yours,
Rev. Liz Goodman on behalf of

Barbara Sims, Moderator
Betsy Sherman, Treasurer
Allegra Chin, Assistant Treasurer
Amy Chin, Collector
Louise McCue, Head Deacon

Ticki Winsor & Ann Trabulsi, Trustees

Walton Wilson, Emily Johnson, Ellen Merritt, 251st Year Committee