

Why We Need a New Building!

Update from the Design Task Force on the proposed building project

For the past 14 years different church task forces have worked to solve our space needs. During this time they have considered a number of different options, including renovation/addition to our existing church building; purchase, renovation, and accessibility improvements to Old Center Hall (OCH); continuing to rent OCH indefinitely; sharing OCH with other renters; renting other office space in the Old Center (including space in the Printing Museum and Masons Lodge); trailers for offices out in the playground; becoming a two-site congregation; altering times for youth programming; reducing programming (Religious Education, youth) and North Parish related efforts (People's Pantry, Great Pond Sangha, Crossroads Coffeehouse) so that we could fit into our current physical plant.

A number of years ago we did move to two services to create more space for our Religious Education (RE) programs – that has helped but has not settled the overall problem. A previous building project (completed 2008) had hoped to solve our space issues, however, other needs – life safety (fire, etc.), drainage issues, accessibility requirements, and substantial preservation needs in our steeple – took priority and kept us from completing the task.

Previous task forces have vetted all of these options. Many have been reviewed/voted on by the congregation. All have been ruled out for various financial, spiritual and pragmatic reasons.

This spring we will again gather to vote on plans to proceed with the current proposal – to replace the existing RE wing with a new suite of offices, classrooms, and flexible use spaces. In preparation for the vote, a review of why we need a new building and what it will provide:

Enhanced and unified home for the congregation and our activities

We will be able to consolidate all activities, including RE and our staff offices, in a single building, adjacent to our programming space. In addition to improving usability with several flexible use spaces and more efficient storage, the new building will provide improved and more appealing spaces for our staff, the congregation, and the organizations we sponsor and house. Much as we have inherited a legacy with our meetinghouse, we will be creating a new legacy for future generations of our church.

Greatly improved accessibility

In addition to the moral and ethical obligation we have expressed to make the entire building easily accessible to anyone who wishes to attend, we have a

required mandate to complete accessibility work left undone during the last building project. Complete accessibility of the RE wing is required by 2016. The ‘one-point-of-access’ solution proposed in the new building plan would meet the mandate *and* allow us to remove the existing non-code-compliant and undersized lift between the Parish Hall and sanctuary.

Safety

Collocating all of our activities under one roof means that we will no longer need for staff, children and congregation members to move back and forth between two buildings across a busy street. The design and location of staff and offices will also make it easier to monitor and create a more secure building and space.

Operating budget and capital expenditure benefits

A new building will require a financial commitment from us all; however, we will be exchanging a one-way outflow of rent for Old Center Hall and a lack of control for an investment in our own building and future. A new building will also improve energy-efficiency, reducing energy costs and enhancing our ability to be “green.”

Removing the current lift between the Parish Hall and sanctuary will avoid the costs of incremental improvements/repairs as it reaches the end of its life expectancy. It will also save the incremental expense of a second inspection (required yearly, currently \$1250/elevator) and provide much needed storage space by the Parish Hall and sanctuary.

From the dedication in the final report on our last building project:

“We are guests of our ancestors who built our meetinghouse and entrusted its care to those who followed. We are stewards for our descendants who will share and enjoy the legacy and history of this space. (We) wish to be responsible tenants during our time here – preserving, protecting and improving our spiritual home so that all who wish can gather in community.”

A new building will require all of us to look hard at the commitment we can and are willing to make to our community. It is our hope that we will find the resolve and resources to do so.