

PLYMOUTH CHURCH

Dear Plymouth Congregation,

We thank you again so much for your generosity to the *The Spirit At Work* capital campaign to make our campus stronger for the near and long term. It is because of your sacrificial gifts that we more than doubled our fundraising goal, with pledges currently totaling more than \$4.1 million.

In order to accomplish this renovation, a Design Task Force was appointed between late 2018 and early 2019. (The Design Task Force members are listed at the end of this notice.) We hired Thomas Fenniman Architects, a firm specializing in houses of worship and landmark properties. As we worked with the firm we were gratified to have selected a team that brought such thoughtfulness and creativity to the design process.

What has happened since your pledge?

Plymouth's Design Task Force (DTF) has been hard at work since early 2019 based on your input in the 2018 members' survey of our program needs. That assessment resulted in a "Wish List" that included pressing and strategic capital improvements to three of our main facilities:

- Transformation of Hillis Hall (kitchen, bathrooms, lighting, storage)
- Refurbishment and enhancement of the Sanctuary (pews, fire suppression)
- Rehabilitation of the Gym (heating, lighting, floor).

Although the Design Task Force looked at all areas, the renovation of Hillis Hall was at the top of this Wish List.

What did Fenniman Architects come up with?

After conducting structural assessments and several rounds of designs during 2019, the Fenniman team proposed a comprehensive plan that presented a new and exciting vision for Hillis Hall plus additional upgrades to other parts of our facility:

- Redesign of Hillis Hall: relocation of the kitchen allowing natural light into the room through the existing windows;
- Increased storage for tables/chairs;
- Expansion of our overall bathroom facilities, not just for Hillis but in several places throughout the complex;
- The replacement of the exterior-facing stained glass windows with replicas of the original clear glass windows;
- Replacement of the playground pool to a "sprayground";
- A fire suppression system in the Sanctuary.

The plan addressed most all of the elements of our congregation's survey, as well as the unseen critical components of the needs of plumbing and electrical systems.

The design was met with joy and anticipation from the DTF, Capital Campaign Executive Committee, as well as Council.

However, it quickly became clear that in order to achieve the full "vision" for our campus, it would certainly cost more than we had raised. To make "the vision" viable, it would need to occur in phases.

How did Fenniman rework the proposed design?

Due to our budgetary constraints, the Fenniman team thoughtfully broke down the proposed plan into three (3) phases to occur over a period of five or more years, depending on funding availability. Each phase is designed to "stand alone" as a completely finished Phase.

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What became clear as the project budgeting process moved forward was the following:

- **Hillis.** The most important components of the renovation--as is the case--are precisely the elements we can't see, such as plumbing, heating and electrical systems. While we had hoped for more finishes in Hillis Hall, updating the "behind-the-scenes" infrastructure is at the root of the room being turned into a functional space. These components need to happen before finishes can happen.
- **Sanctuary.** The Sanctuary is in dire need of a fire suppression system for the safety of this landmarked structure. Last year's loss of Notre Dame Cathedral foregrounded the importance of this work. Yes, the Sanctuary is properly insured, but in the event of a fire it is quite literally irreplaceable.
- **Emergency Capital Repairs.** Over the course of 2019 and early 2020, we had to undertake several capital repairs to our plumbing and heating systems due to their age and shelf life. The urgency of these repairs made us take a step back as to how we schedule this renovation overall.

And then COVID hit...

All design work and research had to be paused. Everyone was on lock-down. Contractors were not authorized to be onsite to do assessments. Additionally, and most importantly, new regulations were coming down the pipeline by the Department of Health with respect to the infrastructure upgrades required to open Plymouth Church School in the fall. This meant all *Spirit At Work* discussions were put on a temporary hold while we prioritized completing all the items on the city, state, and nationally-mandated checklists to make both church and school viable.

The building upgrades included:

- Extensive electrical work to reduce fire hazards and support standalone air purifiers;
- Expansion of hand-washing stations;
- Bathroom fixtures for hands-free safety upgrades;
- Expansion of teacher work spaces for distancing;
- HVAC modifications and additional equipment for better air purification;
- Equipment for modular / temporary classrooms, and so much more.

We are elated that Plymouth Church School (PCS) has had a successful start and that the fall term is underway smoothly. This would not have been possible, however, had we not addressed these critical components of our infrastructure that we had not anticipated at the time *The Spirit At Work* capital campaign was underway.

What does this mean for the *Spirit At Work* renovation plan?

Living in the era of COVID is our "new normal," and will be for the next few years. Does this mean we should abandon the initially proposed concept presented by Fenniman? No.

However, we cannot ignore that there is now a "new normal" based on pandemic recovery principles. The circumstances surrounding COVID are changing faster than much of the news cycle indicates. How the pandemic plays out in the next 12 months will largely determine what may or may not be required in order to operate. Surely, there will be capital infrastructure elements we need to address as part of regular maintenance upgrades. Based on what we have experienced thus far in reopening our school, the "new normal" standards regarding health and safety building codes will most likely increase

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particularly in the areas of air filtration and “high touch” areas. Although the proposed plan as presented by Fenniman still stands as ideal, it merits a re-evaluation given the pandemic and our overall financial health.

What happens next?

The DTF shall resume its regular meetings in early 2021. The team will need to revisit the scope of phase I, drill down on some details that might be missing, make trade-off decisions about what to include and what to defer to later phases, and address the modifications coming out of the pandemic health regulations.

When this work is completed, the DTF will meet with the Capital Campaign Executive Committee and Council to update them on all fronts, and in turn, update the congregation as to when and how we plan to make headway on the project.

Should I keep sending in my pledge?

Yes! This renovation is going to happen. But none of it will be possible without you sending in your pledge. For the security of your pledges, all *Spirit At Work* funds are completely segregated from our operating funds.

Expenditures to date:

Pledged: \$4,161,159

Received: \$1,746,229

Spent to date since FY2018-19: \$435,194 (comprised of the feasibility study, CCS consulting expenses, architect fee and owner’s rep fees, supplies)

If you have questions as to how to send in your pledge, please contact Kasia Bidus at kbidus@plymouthchurch.org. This renovation can’t happen with you!

Many thanks in advance for your support to *The Spirit At Work*.

The Design Task Force: (In alphabetical order by last name)

- Anderson, Amy: Director of Operations
- Barbieri, Sal: Project Manager and Owner’s Rep
- Brisske, Jona: Lay leader | architect by profession
- Deming, Sandra: Council Treasurer | Member of CEC
- Koster, James: Lay leader | Member of CEC | architect by profession
- Martinez, Molly: Executive Administrator
- Robertson, Hannah: Lay leader | architect by profession
- Younger, Brett: Senior Minister