

Because I haven't been attending here regularly since moving nearly two years ago, for the first time in a long time there may be a number of new people who may not really know me. I've been a pretty regular fixture of stewardship season for many years, typically giving a talk around this time each year. If I knew I was going to be here this year, I wouldn't have skipped last year so I could keep my streak going. In any case, most recently I have been the chair of the Capital Campaign committee, and was responsible for overseeing the sanctuary renovation project during the summer of 2014.

I'm here this morning to give you an update on the status of the campaign. I want to start by apologizing for not having done this earlier. While I have kept the Session informed about the status, I resisted several requests from David to address the congregation. I had my reasons at the time, but looking back I realize that it was a mistake to not have given you update. I'll get back to the reasons later, but first I want to review some history of the campaign, the work that has been completed, what went right, what went wrong, why we made some of the choices we did, where we stand, and where we will go from here.

Session was discussing the idea of a capital campaign in late 2011 and early 2012. I was a strong advocate of such a campaign, and as we all know, a danger of being a strong advocate is that you will probably end up being responsible for overseeing the project.

And I did end up volunteering to chair the campaign committee. And though I was the committee chair, there were many other people involved both on the committee itself, and in planning and conducting the various projects.

The campaign committee was formed by Session in early 2012. During 2012 we had several congregational forums where we went over our general plans and received feedback.

The result was a list of projects with an estimated cost range for each of them. Our original plans projected the need for between 6 and 700 thousand in pledges. After going out and talking with many of you, we reduced that to a range of 460 to 590 thousand. We ultimately ended up with pledges from the congregation of about 390 thousand plus 60 thousand from the Foundation and 50 from the Ficken gift, for a total of about 500 thousand in pledges.

There are a lot of different approaches to fundraising, depending on how aggressive you want to be. For many years in the recent past we have taken a very low-key approach where the most discomfort we put people through was listening to my address to the congregation each year.

For the Capital Campaign we were somewhat more aggressive. We hired a consultant, Nancy Muth, a woman who is both a minister and has extensive experience in capital campaigns.

Nancy told us that gifts in the range of 2 to 3 times annual giving was common for campaigns such as ours. That would have meant around 6 to 900 thousand in our case. We ended up with a goal that was around 2 times annual giving. We eventually received pledges from the congregation that were a little about 1.2 times our annual giving. With the Ficken and Foundation contributions, we ended up with pledges totalling around 1.6 times annual giving.

I actually think we did very well in terms of pledges. As I mentioned, we're not a "hard sell" kind of congregation. The campaign involved visits from campaign volunteers with the families of members. I know I had a great experience talking about the campaign with a number of families. We talked about the campaign plans, and people gave important feedback. It was based on this feedback that we scaled back certain items that people felt were less important.

But we didn't do a hard sell. We didn't push the 4% of income recommendation that Nancy Muth had made. We didn't force ourselves on people, so for those that didn't want a visit, they didn't get one. The downside was that we received fewer and smaller pledges that we hoped. We ultimately received pledges from only about half of the "giving units" that contribute to the church. Fortunately, the Foundation and the Ficken gift made up a significant amount of the shortfall.

I don't want this in any way to come across as implying that any of you didn't do your part. I know that all of us on the campaign committee were humbled and felt very blessed by the generous response we received. If there is any fault, it lies with the campaign committee in overestimating how much we could expect from the congregation given that we did not think it was appropriate to be more aggressive in our approach to the congregation than what we did.

To give a quick recap of the numbers, we estimated we would need up to 590 thousand. To date, we have received about 440 thousand of the 500 thousand pledged. This includes funds from Ficken gift and the Foundation. The contributions actually received so far are about 60 thousand less than what was pledged. So, even based on our original estimates, we are about 150 thousand short of what was needed. We have roughly 140 thousand in cash on hand in the capital campaign account, about 44 thousand of which needs to be transferred to the Mission committee. It is important to remember that 10% of the proceeds of the campaign are going to Mission. Session and the Mission Committee have decided to use this to continue the funding our very successful meal ministry project.

Before the campaign was officially kicked off we completed the original A/V installation of the projector, screen, and sound console, and the dining room renovation. These partially used borrowed funds, which have been repaid except for 23 thousand owed to the Housing Fund.

The campaign also received a loan from the Ficken Fund, which still needs to be repaid.

In 2013 we completed the ceiling repair and repainting of Westminster Hall. This work was conducted by the Trustees, but paid for by the Capital Campaign. I think this project was a great success. The room is now more comfortable in the summer, more efficient to heat in the winter, and the ceiling and lighting don't suffer from the potential safety issues we had previously.

In late 2013, I addressed the congregation with the status so far and said we still needed at least 100 thousand in additional pledges to complete the planned work.

In the spring of 2014 we installed air conditioning in the dining room and sanctuary. Our original plans only called for A/C in the sanctuary, not in the dining room. But the cost ended up being much less than expected, and there was a significant cost benefit to doing both at once, so Session decided to include the dining room in the A/C project. The combined project was somewhat more than the original cost estimate for the sanctuary alone, but I think it has turned out to be an excellent investment.

While on the subject of A/C, I'd like to mention that because of the lighting improvements throughout the facility, and even though the sanctuary is being used for services three times a week rather than one, and even though we are using the A/C in the sanctuary and dining room (and this was a very hot summer), our actual electrical use is so far about \$3,000 less than last year.

Before moving on to the details of the sanctuary, I do want to thank some of the people who have been particularly instrumental in what has been accomplished. Many people were involved in the solicitation part of

the campaign, but I'd like to particularly thank Carol Thomson, David, John Cavicchia, and Mike Hopkins. And also Monika Chapman for the wonderful campaign video.

I'd like to thank the Trustees for their work on the dining room and Westminster Hall, and particularly Derek Brown and Steve Falloon. Steve also deserves recognition for his continued assistance through the A/C work and the many ways that he helped on the sanctuary project (and for the many things he has done since). Chris Poulos, in addition to being the church treasurer, does a lot of work supporting our computers and network, and thanks to his efforts we now have good wi-fi access throughout the sanctuary building.

For the sanctuary, once the project started, there was a seemingly endless stream of decisions that had to be made. That responsibility fell to David, Tom Berdos and me. Evie Santo Salvo, Sally Drewes, and Tammy Jackmin provided excellent recommendations for paint colors, carpet selection, and related issues.

Now, on to the details of the sanctuary project.

Chancel renovations had been under discussion for many years, going back to David's early years at FPC. There was renewed interest with the introduction of the second service, and to better serve some of the musical events that we were conducting.

As many of you know, I moved from Scotch Plains to Monroe nearly two years ago, and had a lot of other changes going on in my life outside of church. In other words, I was preoccupied. So, when, from an FPC perspective, I should have been working more diligently on planning the sanctuary project, I was doing other things.

So, when 2014 began we all had to get serious about getting things going on the chancel project, both because we wanted it done for FPC, but also because some parts of the project were required for the Garden of Eden church to become a tenant, something we very much wanted because Temple Shalom would soon be moving out.

When we came up with the estimates for the Capital Campaign projects, we didn't just pull numbers out of thin air. We talked with architects, contractors, A/C experts, and so on. But the truth is that it is very difficult to get accurate numbers. You can get estimates, but when you come to the final stretch, you need to start getting detailed quotes. In theory, you could get detailed quotes earlier, but the problem is that the details of the project sort-of gel as you go along, and contractors will very quickly tire of working on detailed quotes if they think your requirements are changing.

So, as we worked on putting the final plans together, two things happened. The first, and most significant, is that the scope of the work expanded. The second is that we realized that the cost of some of the originally planned work would be higher than expected.

When you work on a project like this, you have to decide on a case-by-case basis what happens when an unexpected cost comes up. You do what you can to reduce the additional cost, but eventually you have to decide whether to press on, or to reduce the scope of the project. The Capital Campaign theme is "Building a Church for the 21st Century", meaning we wanted to improve our facility to what is expected of a 21st century worshiper, or a 21st century tenant. So one of the criteria was "how would this be done in a church built today". The other factor is that this is the first major renovation to this building in the over 50 years since it was built, and this renovation probably needs to last at least as long, so we didn't want to leave any essential items undone.

One expensive item that we initially overlooked was the painting and refurbishing of the pews. The mental picture of the freshly painted walls and new carpet with the old faded and discolored pews was unthinkable, so we went with nearly \$18,000 in additional costs to address the pews and other furnishings on the chancel.

Similarly, although these were things were planned for later in the campaign, the sanctuary project did not originally include painting of the narthex, parking lot entrance and lower hallway. These were badly in need of work, and like the pews, we thought would stick out like a sore thumb if not addressed.

Before the renovation, the choir sat in the pews in the choir loft. During the renovation, Tom Berdos suggested that something better than the chairs from the dining room should be used for the choir. That added about five thousand to the cost.

Improved lighting was always a part of the plan, but the cost was more than expected. Our old lighting was inadequate, as evidenced by the use of construction lights as a stop-gap measure. There was not enough ambient light on the chancel, nor was there enough frontal light. Also, none of the chancel lighting could be controlled from the balcony, something needed both for our own use in conjunction with the video system, and by our prospective tenant.

I know the choir has concerns with the spotlights, and we do have plans to correct those problems in the very near future either by refocusing, or in the worst case, relocating some of the lights. I would like to apologize for the delay in addressing this issue.

It turns out that professional lighting equipment is expensive. But the largest cost involved is the electrical and installation work. Some people have expressed concern about whether we really need the color-adjustable lights on the chancel. Those are known as “wash lights” and in this day of LED technology, they are pretty much all color-adjustable, because that adds almost nothing to the cost and is something that most users of such lights require.

So while the lighting cost was significant, what we did was not extravagant. The company that did the work is the same one that has done our audio/video work, and as we got quotes for the work we kept going back to find ways to reduce the cost. We ended up with what we considered the minimum that was acceptable to meet our lighting goals. We spoke with several other lighting vendors who refused to bid because to address our needs they would have had to far exceed our budget and would have cost two to three times what we ended up spending.

Finally, the other large expenditure was for improvements to the sound system. We needed changes to improve the intelligibility of the spoken word in the sanctuary as well as to better serve the needs of the praise band, and to meet the needs of the Garden of Eden congregation.

The bottom line is that in May, before the project started, we estimated the cost to be about 120 thousand. The actual cost ended up being around 180 thousand. Items not included in the original number, such as painting of the narthex and lower level halls, and the purchase of the choir chairs added about another 15 thousand.

At the start of my talk I mentioned that David had asked me on a few occasions to provide a campaign update to the congregation.

Although most of the work was completed last fall, some parts continued on through the winter and early spring, such as the acoustic treatments and some other tweaking of the sound system.

And as a result of feeling burned out by the effort involved in getting us back in the sanctuary and frustrated by the difficulty working out lingering issues, I found it difficult to put myself in the frame of mind needed to prepare a presentation like this one. I suppose part of me hoped someone else would take on that job.

But I realize in looking back that this was a mistake. I was the one most involved with what was done and why, I had been the face of the campaign for a long time, and I should be the one to present this information. I apologize for my foot-dragging and for not having done this sooner.

So, where do we go from here?

There is still important work that is part of the campaign's charter that remains to be done; most importantly, the accessible bathrooms, and the lift to get between levels of the building.

The campaign committee will be working in the coming months to determine what is needed financially to achieve these goals, and will be getting back to you with more information.

In the mean time, it is important that any questions and concerns you have about what has been done and how the campaign has operated be addressed. If you would like an opportunity to ask questions and get more information about what has been done, we can arrange a time to do so.

I've given a lot of thought to the question "Knowing how things came out, if I had it all to do over again, what would I do differently?" To start with, if I had it all to do over again, I still would. There are a few details that might be done differently, such as the placement of some of the spot lights, but otherwise on a personal level I'm very pleased with how things came out and I do it pretty much the same way again.

Going back to the projects that are yet to be done, we need to get the financial details worked out, but even if we had all of the funds needed to complete the projects, we would not be any farther along than we are now, because we need people to plan and execute the projects. While I have agreed to continue on in a financial oversight capacity on the campaign committee until someone else is available, I'm no longer in a position to oversee the execution of new projects.

For those that might consider volunteering, I expect the projects that remain to be done will be much closer in scope and complexity to the dining room, Westminster Hall, and the air conditioning projects. In other words, not like the sanctuary.

I expected the sanctuary project to be large and complicated, but it far exceeded even my already high expectations in that regard. I checked my records, and during the main part of the sanctuary project last year I sent or received over 1,200 emails about the various issues. This was a difficult project because it involves our sacred space, and everyone cares deeply about virtually every detail, which is appropriate.

As an example, when the cross was first repainted (fairly early in the project), it didn't come out well. That resulted in over 50 emails, and half a dozen attempts at repainting the cross until we came up with something we were happy with.

This is a tough talk to give because I'm sure that you are unhappy, as we on the campaign committee are, of the higher costs of the sanctuary project. But I hope that either now, or in the fullness of time, you will consider the money well spent. Failing that, I hope you will appreciate that we did what we thought was best for FPC.

I want to thank you for your generous support of both the capital campaign, and the ongoing operations of FPC. I want to thank you for your gracious personal support given to me during the difficult days of this project, and hope that if you had it all to do over again, you would still entrust me to look after the interests of FPC in this important project.

Thank you.