The 1874 Project



United Methodist Church
OF GENEVA

The 1874 Project

In 1874, a group of faithful Methodists built a church not just for themselves, but for generations to come. More than 150 years later, we are the recipients of their trust and generosity.

The 1874 Project is our opportunity to care for that legacy. This is not about expansion or extravagance—it's about stewardship. Our historic space has supported worship, mission, and community for decades. Now, with real needs impacting safety, accessibility, and hospitality, we are called to care for this space faithfully and prepare it for those who will come after us.



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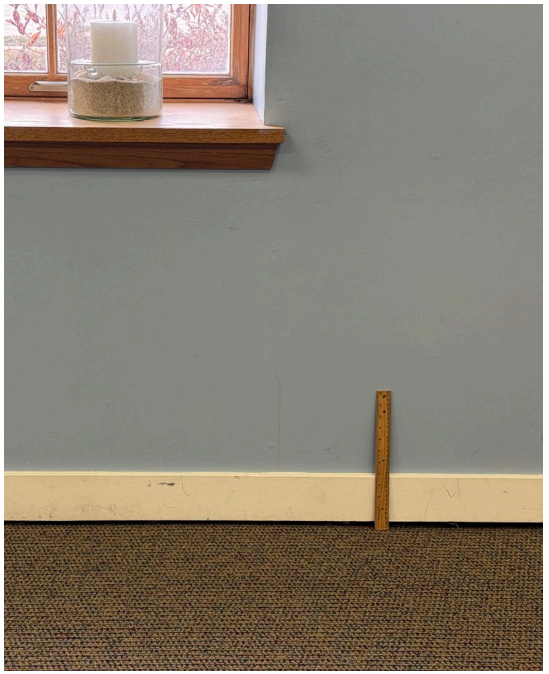
Some of the building's most serious issues are structural. Hidden beneath old wood floors and behind plaster walls the dirt and limestone foundation is deteriorating. Repairing it isn't optional if we want the building to last, but the timing is still ours to choose. If we wait, we risk losing use of Fellowship Hall and the Garden Level, limiting ministry and increasing both cost and disruption. This is our chance to act before urgency becomes crisis.







These images are along the south garden level wall (Route 56) where the floor has sunk 3+ inches and it's where chipmunks like to hide.

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This project is also an opportunity to:

- Improve or add accessibility
- Eliminate dead or limited-use space (especially in Fellowship Hall.)
- Increase flexibility for ministry and community use
- Install plumbing and modern electrical service

We believe now is the moment to be wise stewards, caring for what we've been given so it can serve faithfully for generations to come.



Two steps will be removed for Wheelchair Accessible Entry



Current view upon entering two steps up into historic Second Street Entrance

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Project Scope

- Replace failing Garden Level foundation with concrete floor and vapor barrier
- Upgrade wood structural supports under Fellowship Hall with steel beams
- Add hallway connecting 2nd Street entrance to Atrium
- Make entire 1874 building fully accessible (ramp, flat entry, accessible restroom)
- Create multipurpose space with storage and A/V in Garden Level
- Renovate Fellowship Hall: remove balcony pews, new coffee bar, open stage area, restore ceiling, upgrade lighting & flooring
- Update electrical, add new A/V, and furnish key spaces
- Refresh Bell Tower stairway (carpet, ceiling)

Note: stained glass window renovation is not part this project but in our long-term planning

Timing Options

Preferred Option

- Mid-May 2026 – December 2026
  - Ministry rhythms are lighter in summer.
  - Outdoor gatherings are possible.
  - Least overall disruption, though 1 rummage sale will not be held in Fellowship Hall.

Alternative Option

- January 2027 – August 2027
  - Risks winter construction delays and won't be able to use outdoor space in the height of construction.
  - Still impacts just 1 rummage sale and 1 semester of ministry.

Least Preferred Option

- Summer 2026 – Feb 2027
  - Interrupts two semesters of ministry
  - Impacts Advent and Christmas the most.

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Use Impacts

During construction, the following spaces remain accessible:

- ✓ Sanctuary
- ✓ Parlor & Kitchen
- ✓ Music Room
- ✓ Elevator
- ✓ All Classrooms

Unavailable during construction:

- ✗ Fellowship Hall
- ✗ Garden Level

What this means:

- ✗ No rain location in Fellowship Hall for Pancake Breakfast
- ✗ No on-site funeral or memorial luncheons
- ✗ Large gatherings will require creative alternative spaces

Adaptations in the works

We are already planning creative adaptations for:

- Coffee hour and yoga
- Storage and donations
- Blood drives
- Advent activities
- Vacation Bible School (planned with and at The Neighbor Project in Aurora)

This season invites flexibility, creativity, and collaboration and we are already preparing for it.

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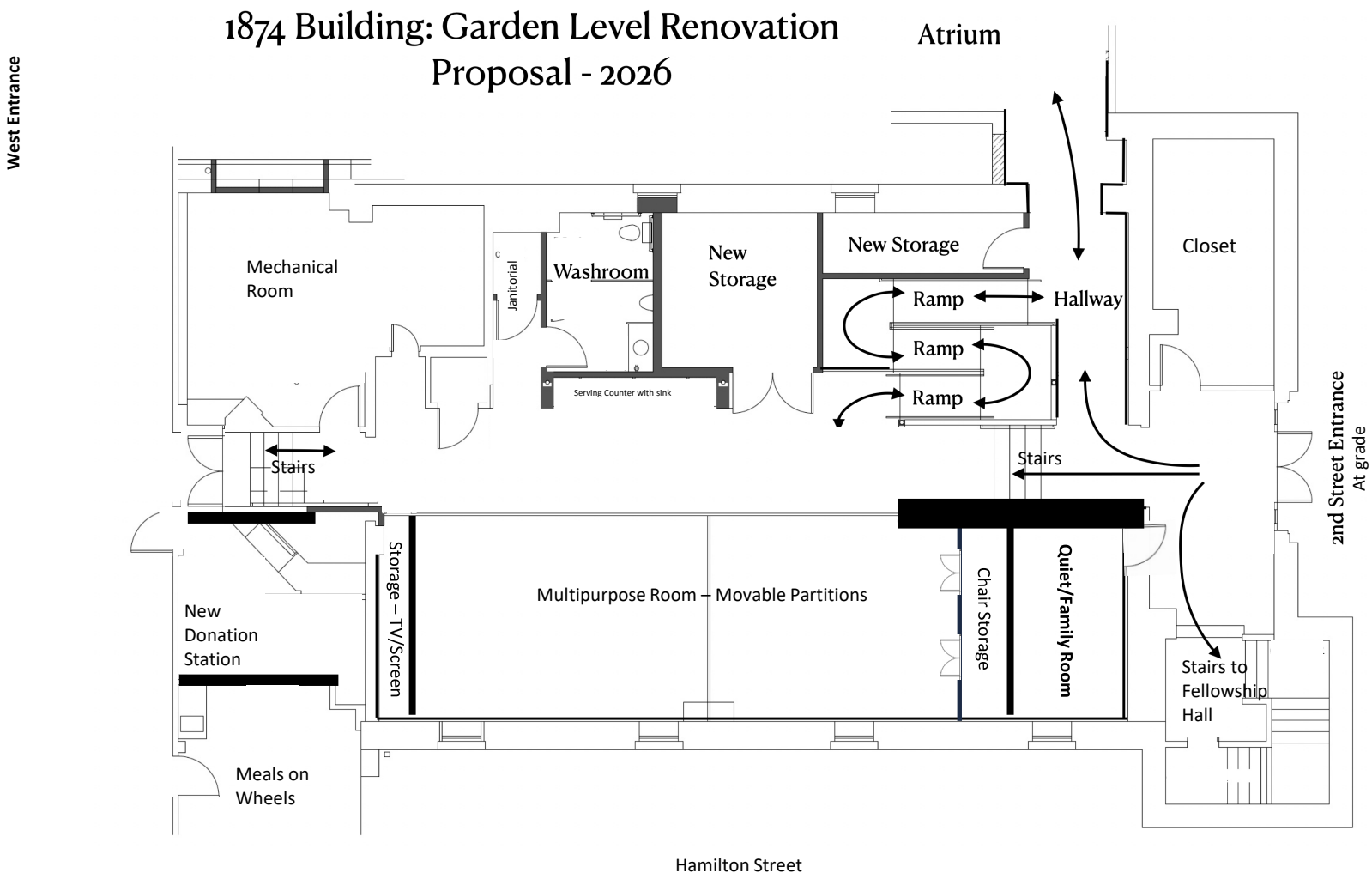

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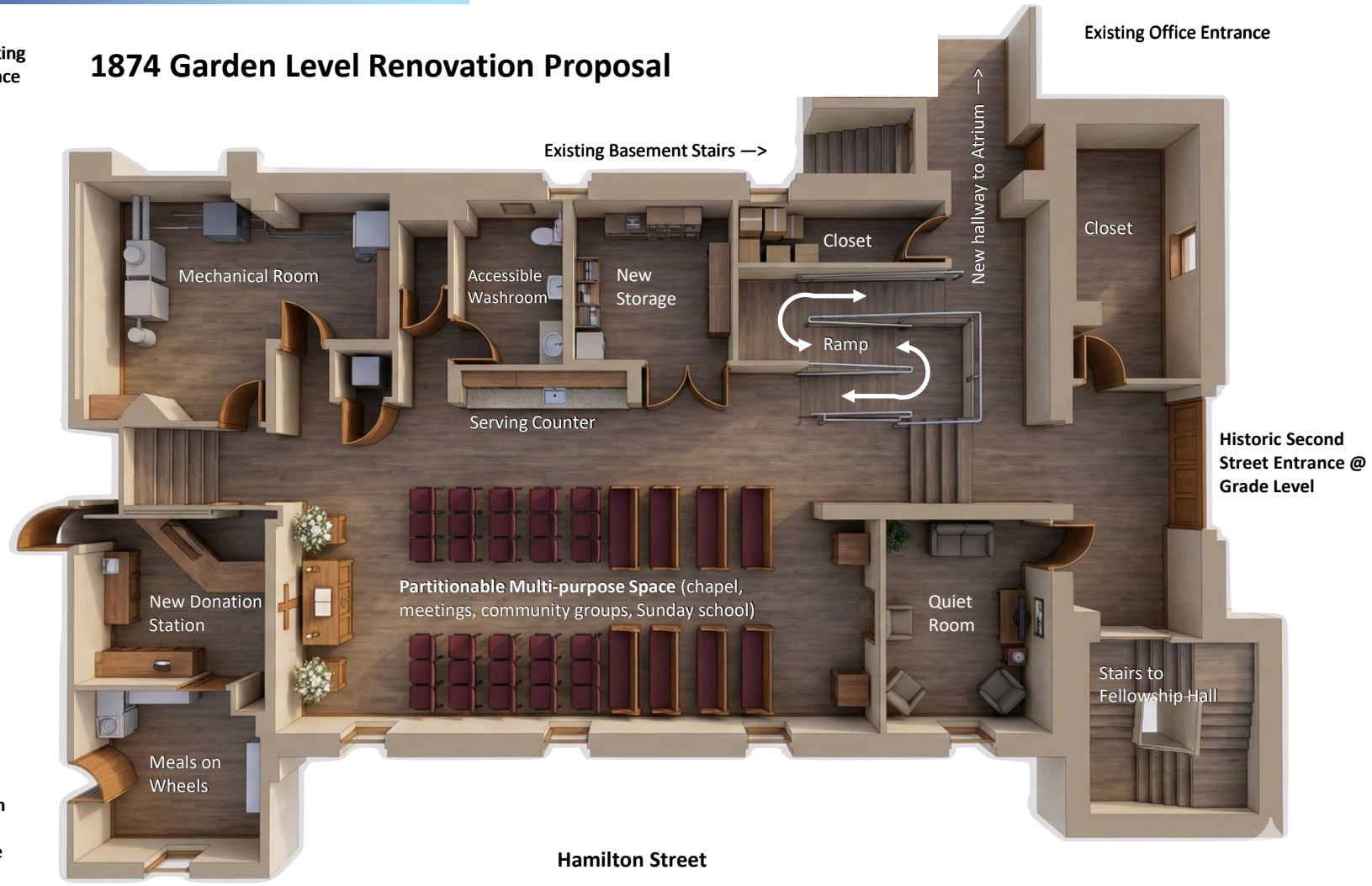
1874 Garden Level Renovation Proposal



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Garden Level Uses







There will be a large multipurpose room with partitions. With room for about 50 the large space can be a chapel, Sunday School classrooms, a big meeting, or small groups. A new quiet room will be added along with storage and a serving counter with mini fridge and sink.






Garden Level Uses (AI generated)

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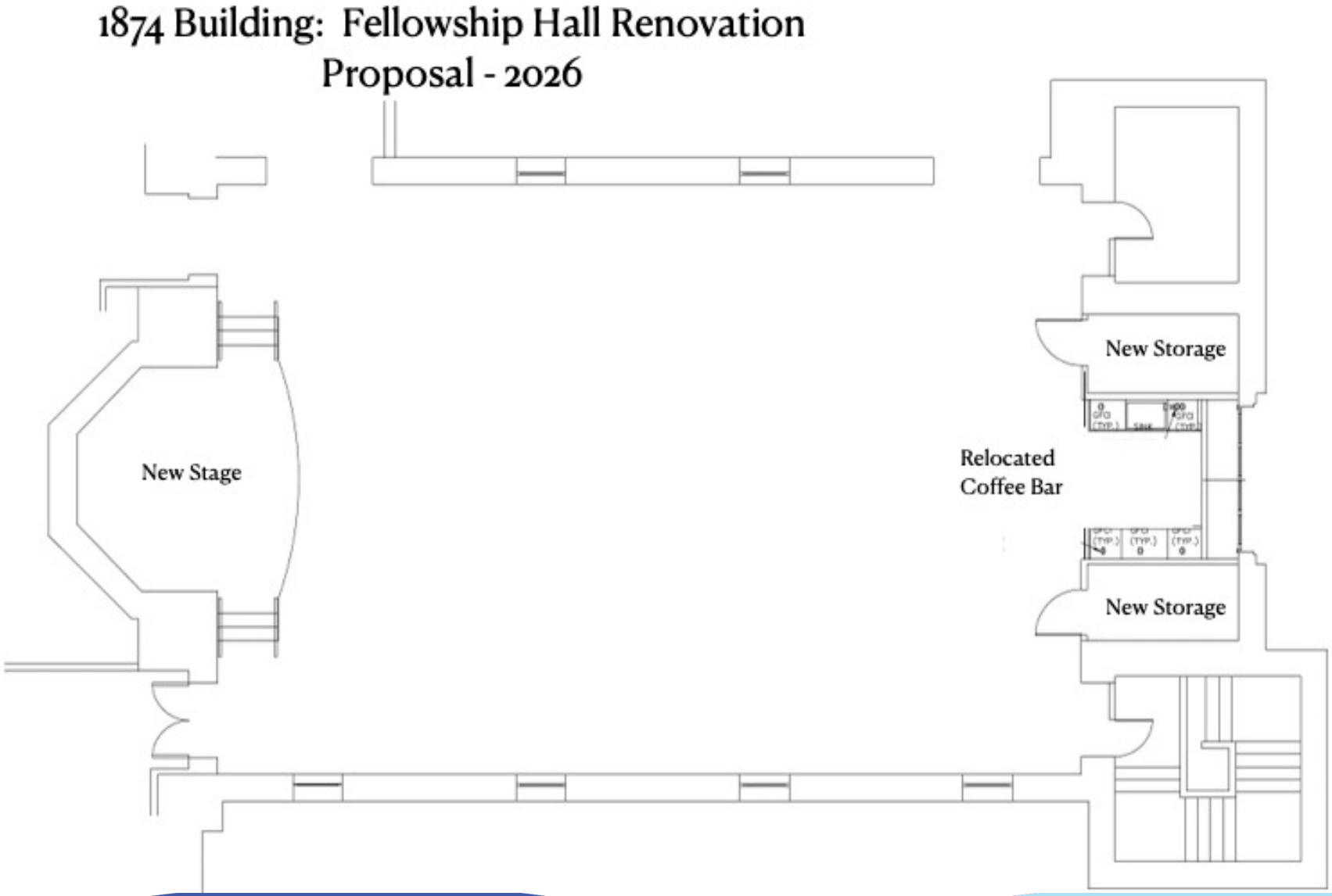

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Why Convert the Coffee Bar to a Stage?

- Structural beam at the base of the current coffee bar can't be removed
- Beam creates safety issues and limits usability
- Area was originally part of the chancel and pipe organ
- Opening the space creates a small but acoustically strong stage
- Ideal for presentations, music, and gatherings—especially with upgraded A/V
- Responds to frequent community requests for performance-ready space



One large screen and/or smaller side screens for video and presentations.

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Why Remove the Balcony & Relocate the Coffee Bar?

- Balcony is underused "dead space" that no longer serves its original purpose
- Removing it adds usable square footage and opens up the room
- Relocating the coffee bar allows us to design for how we serve coffee today
- New layout includes cabinet storage for mugs, dishes and supplies
- Creates space for multiple people to work comfortably
- Improves overall flow, function, and flexibility of Fellowship Hall



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For 152 years, this space has been a place of worship, mission, and community life.

It has hosted prayer and praise, service projects and rummage sales, quiet reflection and joyful gathering. It has been used so fully, so faithfully, that the floors themselves are beginning to give way.

These images are AI-generated, but our calling is not artificial. We are called to illuminate our community with God's grace.

Now is the moment to strengthen what has carried that calling for generations so that this sacred, shared space can continue to serve long into the future.





The Case for the 1874 Project

- The estimated cost of the 1874 Project is $1.3–$1.5 million.
- This range reflects known structural needs, built-in contingencies, and responsible planning, not overbuilding.
- This project matters because it addresses safety, usability, accessibility, and hospitality.
- Delaying won't lower the cost or improve the building it will only shift a greater burden to future generations.
- This isn't about extravagance; it's about faithful stewardship.
- Now is the right time: the needs are clear, the cost is manageable, our church is on a path of renewal, and we are blessed with strong reserves.
- With a self-financed plan and no long-term debt, we can act.
- Generations before us stepped forward when it was their turn; now it's ours.

The 1874 Project

The Capital Campaign

- This project is big, but so is our heart. Based on generous patterns of giving and strong support across our congregation, we believe a capital campaign goal between $1.3 and $1.5 million is both faithful and realistic.
- We may even consider challenging ourselves to raise fund to support less fortunate churches in our area.
- Rather than waiting until all funds are raised, we propose to self-finance the project through the UMGFund and pay ourselves back with pledged commitments over 2–3 years.
- This approach saves us time, avoids interest, and allows construction to begin sooner.
- Today, we are not asking what you can give. We're inviting everyone, including children, to discern what feels faithful and leave a legacy.
- When we do that together, God provides what we need.

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Where you fit in:

- Fill out the 1874 Building Project Survey.
- If interested, join one of the 1874 Building Project teams.
- Stay and ask Ron and Tom more questions.
- Join Pastor Rob in FH on a walking tour to learn more about the proposed work.
- Come back on March 1 – after worship – to participate in our Special Church Conference.

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Your Voice Matters

Faithful generations before us built and preserved this church.

Now it is our turn to discern how to steward it well.

We invite you to complete a brief survey regarding the 1874 Project.

- 5 minutes
- Anonymous
- Helps us move forward responsibly and together

Scan this QR Code to Participate in the 1874 Building Project Survey

1874 Project Teams

A project this meaningful takes all of us. We're organizing into teams each with a clear focus and leadership. Some are already active, others are forming now.

There are teams for:

- Moving & Storage (Wendy & Christine)
- Ongoing Operations & AV (Carolyn & Cheryl)
- Financing & Campaign (Pastor Rob)
- Coffee Bar Design (Hospitality Team)
- Historical Artifacts (Julie)
- Project Oversight (Ron)
- Final Finishes (Bobbi & Kathy)
- Communications

Whether you're skilled at spreadsheets or staging, sorting or storytelling there's a place for you. Let's build something beautiful, together.

Scan this QR Code to Volunteer on an 1874 Project Team