

Facility Updates

Recently the Administrative Council of Maplewood UMC identified five key facility priorities. In broad terms, the priorities are first and foremost accessibility, followed by drainage, the windows, the boiler system, and the kitchen. Then this summer, we experienced a sewage back up in the basement, which caused the Ad Council to pause and re-think the situation.

Investigation by contractors and our trustees revealed that there was an issue with the downspouts and drainage, plus the iron pipes beneath the building are corroded and need to be replaced. It shouldn't take much to realize that repairing and replacing the pipes and other structural damage will be a large and expensive project. The first estimate we have received so far to reroute the downspouts and dig up the basement floor and replace the sewer pipes is over \$100,000. We would need to take out a loan and conduct a capital improvement campaign just to pay for this drainage expense, even if we address no other priorities.

And so there are a lot of questions to be asked. How much debt do we want to incur? How big of a project, i.e. the scope? Do we want to address only the immediate problems of the pipes and drainage, or do we want to roll in one of the other projects that was under consideration before this jumped to the head of the list? How much inconvenience are we willing to tolerate since most or all of the downstairs will, at various points during the work, be unavailable? Will any of our ministries have to be placed temporarily on hold and which ones?

The underlying question is a challenging one to consider: Is this building an asset to our mission and ministry as it is? There is a consensus among congregational leaders that we are in an ideal spot to do ministry in Maplewood – Richmond Heights. The corner of Flora and Sutton is central, walkable, and a safe place. Ministry should happen here. So what does that look like in a building that needs hundreds of thousands of dollars of work to address the needs that have been identified?

Please pray, and think, and talk about these questions. And understand that it is likely there will be disagreement on the answers to these questions. That's okay. We rely upon God's grace to guide us through. Share your thoughts with a member of the Ad Council, and pray for them as they make these difficult decisions on behalf of the congregation.

It is a really exciting time for the church! The decisions we make today will have a lasting impact. So, during this time of waiting, let's be in prayer and conversation so that when the time comes to decide and act, we are ready.

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Thanks,

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