



FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Pastor: Kevin Manuel

Ministers: The Congregation

2nd Day of Christmas, Dec. 26, 2014

FUPC Members & Friends:

Christmastide greetings to you all! As our celebration of the Incarnation continues in this new church year and as we prepare to launch into a new calendar year, I wanted to remind you of the upcoming **January 4th Town Hall meeting**. This letter provides an overview of that meeting's subject matter, and is also being sent out to alumni who might like to know something about the adventure of faith and renewal the FUPC church family is embarking on in 2015.

For much of 2014 we have earnestly and prayerfully made preparations for a "Nehemiah ministry" in 2015. Nehemiah, you may recall, was sent by God out of exile in Babylon to lead the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls with the remnant families. It was an impossible task yet one that was constantly lifted up in prayer, one to which God's people gave themselves with passion and commitment for the common good, and one that was ultimately completed with the help of God at every step, to the praise of His steadfast love and faithfulness.

For many years FUPC has enjoyed the blessing of members who have faithfully sustained various systems and spaces in the building beyond their expected life. This stretching has in most cases already reached, or will soon reach, its limits and existing conditions are hampering the church's ministry and mission to our community. Hence the call to this Nehemiah ministry in 2015.

While we have no expectations of completing our rebuilding project in 52 days (per Nehemiah 6:15!), the scope and schedule of repair, renovation, and upgrades to our building and grounds at 1418 Cambridge St. is nevertheless ambitious and faith-stretching.

The scope includes the following new or renewed features for the building: ADA lift at the side entrance, kitchen, men's bathroom, childrens' bathrooms, heating system, electrical system, plumbing system, and downstairs floors, walls, ceilings, and lighting. **And for the grounds:** new sewer line, storm drainage system, hardscape, stair treads, fence, gate, rails, trees, and other plantings.

The schedule for the largest portion of work, in the downstairs, is estimated to run late June through late September or October 2015. The grounds will likely be completed before the summer as the first part of the sewer line replacement has already been completed and all designs and materials are ready.

The entire scope of work is estimated to cost \$1.2 million at the high end, no small sum! And yet we are heartened as we take this next step of faith because we've discovered time and again over the last couple years that God has clearly gone before us and prepared the way, raising up leaders—new and longstanding, young and old—who share a vision for renewal and who have been making significant investments of time, talent and treasure to bring it to fruition.

The combined total of already provided and/or promised gifts toward the overall scope of work as we close out 2014—before any capital campaign commitments have been secured—amounts to ~\$310k.

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Additionally, the church has a \$50k building accessibility fund and is applying for a \$50k grant to match that fund through the Cambridge Historical Commission.

We spent all of 2014 working with TBA Architects to compile a Master Plan with detailed recommendations for the scope of work. Some of that work is already completed or is underway, e.g., most of the vinyl asbestos flooring downstairs has been replaced, we have complete designs for the heating system, as well as a plan and bid for architectural designs, construction management, etc. We also have a plan and schedule for the capital campaign that the Stewardship & Finance Team will share more about at the Town Hall meeting on the 4th.

In all this, we are encouraged, and yet we know that as with Nehemiah's impossible task, God must be our help and place on the hearts of His people the vision and commitment to see the work completed. In the months ahead the larger FUPC community—including past members and partners in the Gospel—will be invited to make a commitment to see this work through.

Nehemiah prayed fervently in the face of formidable challenges, at every step of the journey, and so too will we continue together in concerted prayer for this work of renewal, even for the continued renewal of our Gospel ministry and mission to the community around us which, it bears emphasizing, is the central point and purpose.

On that topic, I also wanted to report the good news that we have received preliminary—yet very enthusiastic—approval for a Presbytery grant to fund a mission renewal project in 2015. These funds allow Mike Birbeck to transition from his role as seminary intern over the last year to now serve as our pastoral associate in 2015, helping to implement this project envisioned together with the Session for most of the last year. It will involve more intentional evangelism, outreach, and service in our community, through new and existing partnerships.

This is an exciting season! We have before us a monumental task of stewardship, much like that of Nehemiah's generation. Please be in prayer continually even as we seek to renew this house of prayer for all nations and for our neighborhood; and as we seek to live more fully into the ministry of light and salt that is ours to carry out in this corner of Cambridge.

Grace and Peace,

Kevin