

West Cummington Congregational Church

P.O. Box 148, Church Lane
Cummington, MA 01026

October 17, 2011

Re: Church Rebuilding - Report and Request for Approval - Meeting Next Sunday

Dear Members, Friends, Supporters, Visitors,

On May 1 we presented to the Congregation a design for our new church building and a plan to rebuild within a budget of \$800,000 which included a contingency reserve of \$31,200 (4.1%). Now we come back to you with a report on our rebuilding progress and a request that you approve a revised budget, covering known and expected costs of \$860,000, plus a substantially larger contingency reserve of \$80,000 (9.5%), for a total of \$940,000.

We knew that the original budget's contingency reserve was inadequate. Sound building practice requires a contingency reserve of at least 10% to cover unexpected cost increases. We had believed we could find savings in our early estimates of labor and materials to make the \$800,000 figure work. As we sorted through the details, we realized that this would be true *only* if we made early materials decisions involving material sacrifices to the quality of the building - compromises that we were very reluctant to make.

Meanwhile, our fundraising program to raise \$270,000 has been going better than we had expected. In fact, the total we have received as of October 7 in cash and pledges is \$285,241, meaning we have a total already available for building of \$815,241, assuming all the pledges are paid. The Fundraising Committee believes, for the reasons noted below, that the church can raise an additional \$45,000 in gifts and other funds to cover the basic budget of \$860,000. It is not confident, however, that we can raise within the next year the further additional \$80,000 needed to get to \$940,000. The Fundraising Committee nonetheless supports the entire revised budget proposal as a reasonable, even if ambitious, project limit if approached slowly and carefully. If and to the extent costs actually exceed \$860,000, its support for those expenditures would likely be contingent on identifying a source for payment other than borrowing unsupported by gift pledges or resort to the church's investment reserves.

Attached or enclosed with this letter are a single-page budget summary showing estimated construction costs in large categories, comparing the \$800,000 budget approved in May and the proposed revision, and a two-page budget showing those comparisons in more detail.

You will note that while a number of categories of costs have shown declines when compared to the May estimate, the site work, foundation and rough carpentry categories show substantially higher estimates. The reasons for this are:

(1) The site work line item grew from the early estimate in part due to environmental requirements, tree removal, and fencing for site security. The ultimate price tag for blasting and rock excavation totaled \$37,500. To create the drainage trench, provide depth for footings and leave an acceptable rock face profile on the DCR property directly to our rear, nearly 400 cubic yards of material were removed.

(2) The concrete foundation estimate experienced the largest percentage increase (92%), including an unanticipated amount of steel reinforcing. Footing excavations revealed that instead of being entirely on bedrock, the building will sit partially on undisturbed soil, increasing demands on the foundation. Another contributor to foundation price increase is the design decision to face the foundation with local stone.

(3) Our largest dollar amount increase (\$35,000) has been in the rough carpentry estimate. With the transition from the timber frame to conventional “stick” frame (in order to save at least \$70,000 and possibly more), our structural engineer added strength to the frame with multiple layer plywood shear panels, increased plywood thickness and structural grade lumber. In addition, the roof trusses were upgraded in a number of ways for best durability.

The Fundraising Committee believes that the Church will be able to attract sufficient new gifts (a total of \$45,000) to reach our basic building fund goal of \$860,000 in total available funds by year end because:

*Approximately \$19,000 is left from the incredibly generous offer of \$40,000 in dollar-for-dollar matching received last July. When we raise \$19,000, the donor will match it, so we would have \$38,000.

*And we have scheduled events including the Tony Vacca concert at Smith College’s Helen Hills Chapel on November 4, last weekend’s tag sale at the Parish House (results still being tallied) and the silver jewelry sales party to be hosted by Toni Lake on November 19.

There are no plans yet for any additional fundraising events. Should costs exceed \$860,000, the Fundraising Committee would have to engage the church community in further fundraising efforts, probably in the Spring of 2012.

We are calling a meeting of the Congregation for Sunday, October 23, directly after church, in the Parish House, to explain this proposal in more detail, answer your questions to the best of our ability and, finally, ask for your approval of the revised budget. ***Please join us.***

Finally, we want to thank all of you for the dedication, generosity and trust you have shown during these incredibly difficult months of waiting for signs of progress. Please visit the building site. The progress has begun to be tangible.

Sincerely,

Conrad Liebenow, for the Building Committee
Wil Hastings, for the Fundraising Committee
Stephen Philbrick, Minister