



Dear Manhattan Church Congregation,

We'd like to give you an update on the substantial work of maintenance and renewal that's taking place around our building. You've already noticed it, of course, and you'll see more. It's hard to miss the scaffolding that covers the entire front of the building or the presence of the large air-conditioning unit with big air ducts that dominates our foyer. You may have dealt with bathrooms that were out of order because of plumbing breakdowns and repairs. You may also have seen the beautiful transformation of Room 205, the refreshed look of the front stairwell, or many other developments.

It's simply a fact that our building and its systems of infrastructure are old. They were very high quality when installed back in the 1960s, but now they've been working for about 60 years and some have simply worn out, perhaps most notably our entire cooling/heating system. This, obviously, is nothing new.

When our building was being built, our predecessors here, led by Burton Coffman as minister in that period, were acutely aware of the expenses of constructing a building on New York's upper east side. They also could foresee the high costs of maintaining the building across many generations. They made sure that the building we enjoy was very solidly constructed so that it would be an excellent base of ministry for the church for decades and even centuries to come. They also made far-sighted arrangements so that the church would have resources both to build up its ministries as a vibrant church community and to maintain the building without imposing heavy maintenance expenses on any particular generation of members of the church. Through the purchase of land back in the 50s and 60s and through a land lease, they made sure that when major repairs had to be done (in the next century, that is, our century), resources would be available.

We're now in a period of carrying out several of those major restorative tasks over a number of months and years. The work is well underway. We've especially been benefited by the architectural leadership of Charley Diehl as well as Charley's associates. We're working with a major contractor, O + D Builders, to carry through future steps of the work. Jason Isbell has taken a major role in



coordinating our planning work. Stephen Cahnmann is especially overseeing the various steps of work for the elders.

The major work is unfolding in stages. A first major step has been the necessary engineering and architectural design work with required approvals from city agencies. We've also had the careful removal of extensive asbestos that was used back in the 60s for insulating air-conditioning and heating systems and for constructing the building's upper roof. That entire roof surface, sometimes many inches deep, had to be jack-hammered off and taken away. Thus, the scaffolding went up, which is also facilitating inspection and repairs of the front façade of the whole building for long-term integrity. Upcoming stages of work will involve installing a new roof, ready to carry new air-conditioning and heating units. That will lead to full renewal of our air-conditioning and heating for the sanctuary and basement chapel, etc. We'll also have a new, updated fire safety system and safety improvements in our much-used kitchen. And so the process will go forward with further renewal.

Even though such extensive building work is expensive in New York City, the costs are being paid through the resources of the land lease set up by our predecessors. None of the costs will be drawn from contributions to the church's ministry made by all of us as members. All of our contributions to the church go into the active work of ministry of the church. Renewal and maintenance work to extend our building's usefulness for ministry was one of the major things that our predecessors were providing for.

We'll all need to be patient with inconveniences as the various stages of work unfold in the coming months. We'll provide updates as the work progresses and give notice in advance of construction work that impacts how we're able to use the building. The careful planning that's been done, we believe, will lead us as a congregation to have a building that will be an excellent tool of ministry for the many decades to come.

Tom Robinson, for all the Elders
September 14, 2024