

Good morning,

I guess it's pretty obvious that we're making great progress.

Thanks to the efforts of many, many people, we're a couple of weeks ahead of schedule. If things go well, we could be finished in January.

Ah, those four little words: "If things go well". What do I mean by, and how can we be sure that Things Go Well? Three words come to mind: time, money, and spirit

TIME

As you know, a key component of the project is volunteerism. To date, the volunteer effort has been overwhelming. 2500 hours of work that have directly reduced our overall labor costs, plus countless hours providing sustenance for the workers. Amazing.

Now, as the building is sealed in, the volunteer tasks are changing, requiring different skills. So, if you've been intimidated by a lack of carpentry skills, or afraid of heights or tall ladders, your time might be at hand. In the coming weeks, we will be painting/staining, running low-voltage wiring, installing windows and doors, and a mysterious activity called "stucco prep". This summer will bring a lot of outdoor landscaping work as well.

And then: Five – count them, five – Saturday parties to stucco the new building: August 1, 8, 15, and Sept 12 and 19. Each Saturday, we'll need 20 stuccoers, plus stucco mixers and other support personnel. This will be a GREAT opportunity to contribute, and enjoy the sense of accomplishment and community that our current volunteers enjoy.

MONEY

When I last spoke with you, we anticipated a shortfall in our building pledge income of about \$70K, due to the economic challenges facing many of us. This is still our expectation. This shortfall has used up a little over half of the \$130,000 in our budget for contingencies, (i.e. expenses that exceed our estimates).

We, in partnership with Malcolm Dorn and Wallyworks, have made every effort – with significant success - to keep costs within estimates, and reducing them when possible. However, it is almost inevitable that some costs will be higher than expected. Raising the timber trusses and assembling the roof were more complex, more time-consuming, and consequently more costly that we had anticipated.

In addition, as we look forward, we see some infrastructure-related (soft) costs that will be higher than we originally thought. Bottom line: at this point, based on our pledge estimates, our expenses to date, and our expected expenses going forward, our contingency fund is down to about \$25K.

The good news is that it's not all gone. And, we remain confident that, without additional money, we will have our building, and our certificate of occupancy. But, it is less and less likely that we will have money left over for our various UFOs (unfunded objects of our desires) for things like a new sound system, kitchen appliances, renovation of the back of the existing sanctuary, new chairs and tables) – these will have to wait for additional funding.

And what happens if we use up our contingency? If you remember the building options we considered when we had our supplementary capital campaign in the spring of 2008, you'll know the answer: We will still have our new space, but it might not be so aesthetically pleasing (if we have to defer a finished floor) or acoustically enjoyable (if we have to defer the acoustic treatment on the back wall).

So, how can you help? Aside from the obvious (give more money), you can help by paying your pledge as soon as you can. Receiving your pledge payments early will both save money by reducing construction loan interest costs, and will make sure that we don't have to stop work because we've temporarily run out of cash to pay our contractor. If you typically wait until year-end (i.e. December) to do your charitable giving, consider a one-time variation, and pretend you're on a church-year calendar, and play your pledge in June.

Which brings me to SPIRIT (as in Community Spirit)

First, as we come closer and closer to completion, there are bound to be disappointments for some of you

your favorite UFOs that we couldn't afford
things that you assumed would be one way, but somehow turned out another

So, in this context, Spirit means not letting these individual disappointments mar the really neat thing that we as a community have done.

And speaking of neat things, we've noticed that, as the building is taking shape, and we can begin to visualize the future space, many of you are getting ideas about how we will be using them, in particular the foyer and fellowship hall. Not surprisingly, your ideas may be different than, and perhaps even incompatible with, those of others.

One of the possible mottos for our grand undertaking might be: for every problem, there is a process. And here is our process for figuring out space utilization and configuration, especially for the foyer and fellowship hall:

- We encourage you, either individually or through existing task forces or committees, to be thinking about the uses of the space that particularly interest you, and how the space can be best configured to suit those uses. Questions include: What will happen where during coffee hour? Where will art be hung? Will

there be furniture in the foyer? Where will the membership table, and badges, be on Sunday mornings. What will the fellowship hall and foyer be used for on the other 6 ½ days of the week?

- Sometime in late July or early August, we will have one or two meetings where we can walk through the space, share our various thoughts/needs/wants, and work towards a mutually acceptable plan. No decisions will be made before these meetings; so, don't worry about being left out because you need a little extra time to think
- As for the fellowship hall (existing sanctuary), we will consider its use during the transition period (before the back of it, and the offices upstairs, are renovated – probably during the summer of 2010). Final decisions on the renovation will be able to wait until next spring, after we've had an opportunity to experience, and experiment with it.

I feel confident that this process, and our community spirit, will help us optimize the use of our space.

ONE FINAL IDEA

Habitat for Humanity has a tradition, called Prayers in the Walls, where volunteers and other well-wishers are invited to write messages on the studs, before they are covered in sheet rock. We thought that a similar ceremony would be appropriate here. Needing a more UU appropriate name, we settled on Irv's "Words to the Future". So, after this service, if you'd like to write some thoughts (perhaps to be uncovered in a future expansion or renovation, perhaps never to be seen by others), please do. We'll have markers available. If you need more time to properly compose your thoughts, you can write them on a future Sunday, as long as you don't wait until after the walls are insulated. And if you need a lot of space, because you have a lot to say, consider writing on a piece (or pieces) of paper, place them in an envelope, and stick the envelope in a special place in the walls.

Thanks, and I'll see you in the new space, after the service.