

Slide 1

Good morning. My name is John Armstrong, and believe it or not, I requested the opportunity to talk with you this morning about why we need a capital campaign. My comments will focus on our physical home.

A little about me. I am currently co-manager of facilities with Ed Tomlinson. I also served on the construction oversite team and spent part of nearly every day on site photo documenting the construction of our new addition and communicating the progress to the congregation.

On a personal level, Judy and I have been part of Sunnyhill since we moved here from New Jersey in 1981. We raised our children here, and are perhaps the only three-generation family active in the church. Our daughter and granddaughter both serve as worship associates.

Slide 2: Aspirations

I'm going to divide my comments into two parts: First, our vision and aspirations – and what it will take to achieve our vision.

Second, I'm going to take you on a virtual tour of Sunnyhill and show you the realities of the condition of our heritage building.

Let's start with the history of our aspirations.

Slide 3: Our History - YWCA

UUCSH began as a Fellowship in 1965. Our founders spent the next six years meeting in rented facilities like the YWCA and storing materials in the trunks of members' cars. In the process they laid the foundation upon which Sunnyhill is built today, both literally and figuratively.

Slide 4: Sunnyhill purchase

Eager to have a permanent home, in 1971, the congregation purchased the then 50-year-old Sunnyhill mansion for \$92,000. Several members took significant personal financial risk to make the purchase, including taking out

second mortgages on their homes. We are the direct beneficiaries of their financial commitment.

Members pitched in to transform the mansion from a private residence into a church. The living room became the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, and could seat about 75 people with the chairs jammed together. For special services, especially when children were home from college, members' families would stand and sit in the dining room and foyer listening to the services on speakers but unable to see what was going on.

Slide 5: 1994 Capital Campaign

In 1994, Sunnyhill held a Capital Campaign to raise \$340,000 to extend the main room, and the basement below it by 18 feet and increase seating to 128. The ceiling was converted to its present cathedral shape, the kitchen was upgraded and expanded into a former side porch, and some improvements were made to classrooms. Once again, much of the work was done by members of the congregation. Bill Cook, then a painting contractor, painted Sunnyhill for little more than the cost of the paint.

Slide 6: 2012 Capital Campaign

We had lofty goals when we launched the 2012, *We Can Be Heroes* campaign. But, when we approved the final design for the new \$3.1 million north wing, we acknowledged that although we had made great strides toward realizing our vision, we had sacrificed some important goals, and we committed to achieving those goals in the future.

In 2018, a year after the new north wing was dedicated, Peg Hart and I got together to write a Case Statement and formulate some approaches to achieving those goals. After taking time off for Covid, joined by Carrilee Hemmington and Ed Tomlinson, we got back to work studying options and costs. That work was turned over to the Board to serve as a starting point for future planning. Some of what we learned is reflected in my comments.

Also, if you don't know Peg Hart, she is an architect and served as our representative during the design and construction of this wonderful new sanctuary. It's an understatement to say how lucky we are to have her.

Slide 7: We Can Be Heroes – Large modern classrooms

We not only fell short of our goal of building “large, modern classrooms and meeting spaces,” we actually have two fewer classrooms and 217 square feet less classroom space. For simplicity, I’m going to use the term classroom, with the understanding that classrooms also serve as meeting rooms for Chalice Circles, other special interest groups, and community events.

The old north wing of Sunnyhill had four classrooms. Three classrooms were upstairs and one, called the Pumpkin Room because of its color, was on the main floor. Together these rooms totaled 756 square feet.

In the new north wing completed in 2017, we have two rooms: the Carol Karl Choir Room, which is 374 square feet, and the Oak Room, which is 165 square feet and oddly shaped. The Oak Room, while bright in cheerful, is smaller than the smallest of the four rooms that were demolished in September of 2016, and it can only comfortably accommodate 10 to 12 people.

Covid-19 has changed the perspective on cramming students into small classrooms. After SARS, Avian Flu and Covid, we no longer assume that the next epidemic or pandemic is years away.

To be proactive, our classrooms should meet CDC guidelines for adequate spacing and proper ventilation and reflect our commitment to reducing the likelihood of spreading airborne disease.

We believe the congregation and community would be best served with six accessible classrooms on the lower level, either all new or a combination of new and renovated space. At least two of those classrooms would be separated by a moveable wall to allow for larger meetings. That would allow us to reallocate the Oak Room for office space or other purposes as needed.

Slide 8: We Can Be Heroes – Space for Fellowship

Another part of our vision was to build a “space for fellowship, where common-interest groups can meet and bond.”

A minimally useful Fellowship Hall, given the size of our congregation, would be approximately 2,400 square feet. With the proper number of exits, that space would allow us to seat 220 people at round tables of 10. Among other things a Fellowship Hall this size would better accommodate our service auction which annually attracts about 175+ attendees.

A Fellowship Hall with table seating for 220, the capacity of our Sanctuary, would the added benefit of making Sunnyhill an excellent choice for revenue producing weddings.

Another part of our vision that would make us an attractive wedding venue is “a better kitchen.” Our chefs regularly plead for more prep and storage space. Our current kitchen, has other shortcomings besides space.

Slide 9: Aspirations recap

It would take a very successful capital campaign to add more classrooms, to build a fellowship hall, and to upgrade our kitchen to provide more counter and storage space and new appliances.

In a perfect world, we could do it all. In the real world, we may have to prioritize the elements of our vision and create an infrastructure that would allow them to be added at a later date. The options we sketched out take that into account.

Slide 10: Our Reality

The heritage portion of Sunnyhill does not serve us well and is deteriorating. Keeping any part of it will require significant financial investment that could, in some cases, exceed the cost of a new building.

As promised, I’m going to take you on a quick virtual tour to show you what I mean, starting in the Fellowship Hall.

Slide 11: Fellowship Hall

Our Fellowship Hall has a maximum capacity of 128 people standing or sitting in chairs and 60 people at tables. And, because it cannot be closed off, it has limited use for interest groups or meetings.

With no HVAC, the room becomes uncomfortable in the warmer months. With windows only along the south side and on the west end, creating decent circulation is difficult, even with the ceiling fans.

Slide 12: Dining Room

The dining room is bright and airy and could have excellent cross ventilation, however, when the screens are in, you cannot access the latch to open the window. In the warmer months you will often see an open window on each side with no screen, which has from time to time led to an infestation of flies that seem to gather in black masses on the windows behind the Sanctuary stage. In 2017, the floor was patched and refinished, and the walls were painted. The most recent upgrade to the dining room was the addition of four 20-amp outlets for crock pots and electric skillets by the facilities team.

Slide 13: The Kitchen

Since the kitchen was remodeled in 1995, the only upgrades have been LED lighting, a new coffeemaker, a new dishwasher, a new grease trap and a new exit door.

As mentioned before, the area between the end of the island and the wall was once a porch with a door to the patio in the wall beside the industrial refrigerator. When we get outside, I'll show you what is supporting that refrigerator, the sink and chest freezer that occupy that space.

Primary storage for the kitchen is the alcove and in two closets in the basement.

Slide 14: Kitchen Stairs

To borrow from the musical *Oliver*, you access those closets via, "a dark, grim, winding stairway without any banister." It does have a banister, but it is so low, that it does not meet the building code. Now imagine that the queen of the kitchen and our primary source of Sunday coffee, Donna Kaufmann, regularly negotiates that stairway.

Watch your step, we're going downstairs to the Rainbow Room.

Slide 15: Rainbow Room

The ceiling of the Rainbow Room is kept in place by lag screwing 2X4s to the floor joists above. The ceiling must be a newer addition because it is plaster over metal lath. Older sections are plaster and wooden lath. While not attractive, the 2X4s have stabilized the ceiling and mitigated the need to replace it. We have leveled the floor twice, the first time in 2017, and the second time after water coming in under the wall caused the leveling material to separate and crack and the carpet to become moldy. To stop the water, we added a sump pump, and when that didn't solve the problem, we added a new gutter and re-graded the soil outside the dining room, which is above the Rainbow Room. So far, this seems to be protecting the new floor, but we are still getting efflorescence and mold on the wall.

For ventilation, the Rainbow Room has two tiny single-pane windows that leak. Air circulation is virtually nonexistent, and the air is stale. Odors, like a rodent we believe died in the ceiling, hang in the air. A music school rents this room for piano lessons, and we have done as much as possible to reduce humidity to protect the piano and provide some ventilation.

Slide 16: Library

The archway between the library area and the main basement classroom is cracking and sagging. This archway was enlarged sometime during one of the very early modifications to the building. Directly above this arch is the wall between the foyer and the Fellowship Hall. We suspect that the beam was undersized, but we don't know if the cracking is a cause for concern. We keep an eye on it.

Slide 17: Mechanical Room

Let's take a quick detour to our new mechanical room. During the pumpkin sale festivities, our sewer temporarily backed up and flooded the room with sewage. We hired a professional company to clean and sanitize the room at a cost of about \$1500. I mention this because we have six low-flow toilets and one urinal flowing into a 100-year-old terracotta sanitary sewer that joins with our new PVC sewer under this floor. It's only a matter of time before overzealous TP use causes another backup.

Slide 18: Youth Room

A few years ago, we gave the youth room, which is in the 1995 portion of the extended building, a makeover with quality vinyl flooring, baseboards, paint and furniture. It's a nice room with a few shortcomings. There is no emergency egress through the windows. While that's not a violation of the fire code, it does concern us. The most flammable portion of Sunnyhill is the Fellowship Hall directly above the door to the classroom.

There is virtually no air circulation in the room, even with the air conditioner running. We recently removed a dead mouse from the ceiling, but the smell hung in the air for a long time even after. Now imagine the room filled with 20 teens cranking our pheromones by the gallon. This room is also rented by the music school for piano lessons. Let's get out of here!

Slide 19: Main RE Room

This is our largest classroom. You can see from the photos that it is not accessible. With multiple levels, none of the basement classrooms are accessible. The scale of the furniture prevents it from being used for Chalice Circles or other gatherings. With only two windows on one side, there is no air circulation. The air is stale. We haven't run any air quality or radon tests, but I feel certain we'd be unhappy with the results.

The wooden races in the ceiling cover heating pipes and electrical wiring and are perfect highways for rodents. The good news is that we've only found field mice. We don't have a rat infestation like the one that closed the church back in the 80s.

Key takeaways from the basement tour are, it's not accessible, it is deteriorating, and there is no air circulation or proper HVAC.

We're almost done with the tour. Let's head outside through the brown exit door.

Slide: 20 Downstairs Emergency Exit

The walkway in the lefthand photo takes you to the garage. If we needed wheelchair access to the large classroom, we would use this path and lift the wheelchair down the two steps into the classroom. This is the route

used by the music school to bring in pianos. The wall is on the verge of toppling. We have a plan to deal with it when it does, but not before. We are concerned about how the collapsed wall would affect the emergency stairs in the right-hand photo until we can clean up the mess and regrade the hill.

I've saved the best – or worst – for last.

Slide 21: Garage Ceiling

The garage ceiling is constructed of reinforced concrete slabs that once served as a patio accessible from the porch turned kitchen extension. We believe that it was done in the '50s when the original garage for the mansion was sold and converted into the yellow house you can see from the windows of the Fellowship Hall.

This picture only shows a few of the many slabs that are spalling and cracking. (Rusting rebar exerts up to 9000 psi pressure on concrete as the iron undergoes oxidization to become iron oxide, aka rust.) Since this picture was taken a few weeks ago, the crack has widened. We hired a structural engineer to look at the condition of the slabs. He gave us a solution that would not repair the garage but would protect the materials stored there, and more importantly anyone in the garage from getting injured by a catastrophic failure until the garage could be replaced. At a cost of \$20,000, we elected instead to limit access to the garage and keep a watchful eye on it. The garage must be torn down and replaced with an outbuilding, regardless of the congregation's decision to pursue a capital campaign or not.

Slide 22: Kitchen Support

This photo shows a pillar that supports the southwest corner of the kitchen extension. The right side of the commercial refrigerator sits above this column. There are two things worth noting.

Slide 23: Kitchen Support Close ups

The lefthand photo shows the base of the column. What looks like solid concrete used to be an open hole that allowed dirt to run into the garage

from outside. Tired of constantly cleaning up the dirt, Ed and I, dug out the remaining dirt, framed up the opening and filled it with concrete. It is hardly a replacement for a footing, and we have no idea how much stability it provides. The rough concrete to the right is part of the original building footing. When the garage was added, the builder dug down below the top of the footing all along the west wall of the south wing to level the garage. Not a great idea because exposure causes footings to deteriorate and makes them unstable.

The righthand photo shows the terracotta blocks that sit atop the pillar directly supporting the southwest corner of part of the kitchen that used to be a porch. This pillar once sat on solid ground. These are the same 1920 blocks used for wall construction throughout the building.

In this photo you can also see how the block wall of the garage is cracking and coming apart.

It bears repeating that the garage needs to be demolished and replaced; preferably on the other side of the driveway so we can one day use this space to build new classrooms.

Slide 24: Outside the kitchen

This slide shows the slab the facilities team poured over an old deteriorating slab. The slab used to have holes in it to hold trash cans. It's not pretty, but it does reduce the amount of water running down the foundation wall and washing out the dirt under the footings that Ed and I filled with concrete.

Slide 25: Kitchen Support

I saved my favorite pictures for the end. There are three pillars supporting the south end of the kitchen. These are two of them. On the left is a deteriorating terracotta pier on the southeast corner and on the right is a 4X6 wooden post that is approximately center and sits partly on the ground and partly on concrete. I don't know what has been gnawing on it. Three sketchy pillars supporting the entire west end of the kitchen and an industrial refrigerator, a sink, and a chest freezer – oh, and the people who wash the dishes.

Slide 26: Southeast corner of the kitchen

The left-hand photo shows the outside of the terracotta pillar on the south east corner of the kitchen, and the right-hand photo shows the settling and cracking of the building caused by the deterioration. If we decide to save the south wing of the heritage building, this section will have to be jacked up and a proper foundation built underneath it.

Slide 21: Sunnyhill Logo

That ends the tour and my time. I hope what you have learned will help you in your future decision to support a capital campaign. I believe that we can achieve our vision by providing the safe and attractive space we need to better support programs and involve the community, whether it is building all new or a combination of renovation and new construction.

I am very excited for our next steps, and I would happily show people through the building so they can see first hand the opportunity we have for growth.