

Building Centennial Campaign Reflection
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My daughter Laurel – who’s 13 – asked me a question last Monday on the way to school. She’d been to youth group the night before, where they’ve been discussing this building project. She said “Mom, why do we need to spend \$20 million dollars on a building when we could be giving that money to the community instead?”. She asked this in the middle of morning dropoff, so I had less than 5 minutes to try to address her thoughts. That was a pretty good dry run for what I want to say to you all today.

Well first we don’t have \$20M dollars to give away. Rather, what we have is an opportunity to raise and spend \$5M in order to gain a \$20M building. But leaving the numbers and investment opportunity aside. Why ARE we doing this? For me, this answer is about community. And for community to thrive, and grow, as we hope, as we’ve seen over the past few years, we need space.

If space weren’t important, why not just hold all services on Zoom? Or in a parking lot. Or an open field? One thing Covid showed us was that it’s not just the people who make a community. It’s not just the content of the services. Communities are built in physical spaces. You need space. And not only that, you need the right space.

I serve as an usher, and I can tell you, from that perspective, space matters. I’ve ushered at funerals and seen firsthand the bewilderment of new visitors to our church as they try to figure out our entrances and lack of signage. One goal of this building project is create a clear and welcoming entrance, leaving no question as to where people need to go and how to get there.

I have also had the privilege of hosting a table at our pre-annual meeting potluck. I've seen that room packed to the gills and unable to truly accommodate all who wanted to participate. Who would have thought we would outgrow our own parish hall for community dinners and events? But this is a good problem to have.

I have seen friends and parishioners limit their involvement in after-service activities due to the awkward accessibility we offer. I've heard others lament how they would love to have their mobility-challenged friends and family join them at a special service or a choir concert, but they don't want to negotiate the instructions of just how navigate into the nave on wheels.

I've seen and been one of those parents who have had to interrupt important conversations because I no longer had eyes on my kids. How wonderful and freeing for parents if we could offer a parish hall where they could have conversations while keeping an eye on their kids in an adjacent play space, and not have to choose between community connection and family safety, or in my case – if you've met my twin boys – building and fire safety.

I still find incredible solace in this building. It's familiarity to me, after only a few years, is comforting. But as my involvement and commitment to this church have grown, and this parish has grown, I also see our building's limitations.

If we want to grow, if we want to continue to build community within, so we can serve our wider community, we need the space to do it. This is why I've already made my pledge. And I'm not alone – at this point in our campaign, every member of the Vestry, every member of the building committee, and every member of the campaign committee – has pledged. I urge you to join us. Not just because it's a good financial investment – which it is. But primarily because it is truly an investment in our community, now, and many years into the future. Thank you.