

St John's Comprehensive Long Term Capital Improvement Plan
A Bold Proposal to the Council and Congregation



St John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1819, a year before the formation of the City of Miamisburg, Ohio. The second oldest organized Congregation in the State of Ohio, our Social and Christian based ministry has been an integral part of our community for over two centuries. During this lengthy period of mission work and existence, the world in and around Miamisburg has changed utterly beyond recognition of our first parishioners. The larger "Church" has experienced massive social changes, and our Congregation continues to react to both an aging Congregation and a generational decline in Church Membership.

Throughout time, this Congregation has responded by asserting and sustaining a strong physical presence at 470 S Gephardt Church Road. We have maintained a Sanctuary and its grounds for more than 207 years. As we continue to contemplate St John's role in our community, one thing is certain. If we are to maintain a safe, secure, and welcoming community environment within our grounds and buildings, we must responsibly plan for and execute measures that will continue to support a safe, attractive, and restful physical presence here in Miamisburg.

If the past tells us anything, local and world events can and do effect our Congregation. In 1862, in the midst of a costly civil war, we dedicated the St John's "Meeting house" Sanctuary. We made the statement that there were longer term plans for our Congregation despite this conflict. In the 1950's, the Congregation took it upon itself to improve the congregation's facility by raising that church and hand digging a basement room that created the undercroft. In the 1960's, expansion created the need for the Fellowship hall and lower level classrooms. In the 1990's, in a bid to greatly improve accessibility, St John's built its current Sanctuary dedicating it in 1994. It was costly, and took decades to retire that debt, but eventually we owned the space mortgage free.

Today, as we deal with the combination of an aging membership and declining congregational attendance, some might think, or even say openly that our best days are past, and we are on the track to close our doors within a half generation. That is a *possible* outcome. But it *is not the only outcome*. As we continue to strive to open our doors to new social and community support missions, we continue to hit "artificial barriers" that directly or indirectly hinder our progress. Many of these barriers are physical, others are due to the aging infrastructure of our church. Infrastructure projects to improve accessibility, reduce energy usage, and make facilities more user-friendly in particular seem like intractable problems. There are many things the Congregation would like to do, but it always seems to come down to one thing... do we have the money, and are we willing to invest it to help us chart a better path to the future.

We'll return shortly to the issue of money. In this proposal, the trustees want to visit the possibility of options and priorities of improvements *irrespective of financial constraints*. In other words, if we *had* funding to improve our aging infrastructure, *how would we prioritize improvements?*

Facility Needs and Prioritization:

The Board of Trustees has visited and revisited this topic many times in the last 20+ years. In order to fully understand the priorities and needs in context, let's start this conversation with a comprehensive assessment of our "must have" facility needs, and supplement that with "nice to have" upgrades of our facilities. Once we understand the entire list, we can begin to understand what commitment it will take to execute long needed facility upgrades.

Site-wise Heating, Cooling, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Status and Needs:

At the present time, St John's has a plethora of inter-related HVAC systems. Some of these systems are fairly "young", others are very old, ancient, inefficient, and subject to catastrophic failure at any point. Let's go over these in order.

1. **Main Sanctuary HVAC Status:** The main sanctuary was built in 1994, and has four separate air conditioning units and two integrated gas heated furnaces and air handlers. Note these units also provide heating and air conditioning in the Narthex and upper level around the perimeter of the office and Pastor's office/upper room. Of the original four HVAC units installed in 1994, each AC unit typically would have a 20 year service life. Two have been replaced (~2018 window), two units are still original but have been repaired/serviced in the last several years. The gas furnaces for heating are original, but are relatively serviceable. We have been advised that if we replace the 2 oldest AC units, we should replace the gas furnace burners with higher efficiency units.
 - a. **Recommendation 1:** These units are likely the least costly per replacement than any other units in the church. They were significantly serviced when we had our "copper theft event" several years ago, so we believe we may get several years of service before another major failure. Thus we recommend *no changes* at this time.
2. **Fellowship Hall HVAC Status:** The fellowship hall systems are the least serviceable of all our combined AC and gas furnaces. These are also the units that most worry the Board of Trustees. There are two large AC units (~25,000 BTU/ea) on the roof that are exposed to the elements, with gas heating supplemental air handlers in the ceiling of the fellowship hall. The Fellowship hall is also our most used venue outside the Sanctuary. The age of these units (around 2000) also means they are very energy inefficient, likely in the SEER 6 to 8 region. A failure in one unit will precipitate a likely replacement of both units with either one larger more efficient unit or two smaller efficient units.

Final Plan for Council and Congregational Approval – 26 August 2026

- a. **Recommendation 2:** The Board of Trustees recommends that two complete bids be solicited to proactively replace these units at our earliest opportunities. Based on previous HVAC work, we suggest bids by Watkins HVAC (Christian based bidder we've used with very high customer service ratings) and Korreect HVAC (Miamisburg). These bids should also be coordinated with the recommendation in paragraph 3-a below as well.
3. **Sunday School Wing HVAC Status:** Although not used nearly as much by our congregation as the Fellowship Hall, the Sunday School wing is used extensively by the Tamil Language school. The current system in the Sunday school is archaic by every possible standard. The heating is "resistive based 220v resistors" in wall units throughout the Sunday school wing. It is controlled by an early 1960's timer/relay system that has no source of spare parts. The Sunday school wing also has ducted Air Conditioning dating from perhaps the mid 1980's, consisting of a SEER Air Conditioning system. The Sunday school wing is, by far, the most inefficient HVAC system on our property.
 - a. **Recommendation 3:** The BOD solicited a single bid about 3 years ago to replace all the resistive units and the AC unit with a more efficient gas furnace and AC unit using the existing AC duct system. Gas is available in the elevator room, and would need to be routed to the closet in the nursery. This is not a difficult problem. The BOD recommends we again get two bids on replacing the lower unit with a high efficiency heat pump. The BOD believes that we could experience significant "per use" utility costs in the Sunday School wing if we proceeded with this replacement.
4. **Meeting House and Undercroft HVAC Status:** In the early 1990s, we replaced the old oil furnace with a gas furnace, then added AC units to these systems. They are fairly efficient and work perfectly. Ductwork allows either or both the Meeting House and Undercroft to be heated. The systems keep those areas comfortable, although in the summer when the undercroft AC is off, we require and use a dehumidifier. The BOT doesn't recommend any changes to these systems.
 - a. **Recommendation 4:** No changes or replacement to this system is envisioned at this time.

Meeting House Accessibility Status, Needs, and required maintenance:

1. **St John's Meeting House:** Going over the history of the St John's, one of the biggest reasons that the Congregation in the early 1990's voted to build a new Sanctuary was based on accessibility issues with the former Sanctuary, now known as the meeting house. In the early 1990's, the old Sanctuary was completely full for 1 service, and about 25% full for an early service. During the late service, parking was a major problem. In addition, the decision to raise the old Sanctuary back in the 1950's had created a significant accessibility challenge for our oldest members. The big steps in the front entrance were uneven, and no ramps or lifts existed to accommodate wheelchair or mobility impaired individuals. Furthermore, there were no restrooms on the main Sanctuary level, and the only restroom in the undercroft was accessible only through 3 flights of stairs. A cost study in the late 1980's indicated it would take (at the time) 50-70K to modify the

sanctuary and install a Sanctuary level restroom. Many felt the investment into a new sanctuary (around 375K by the time we were finished) was a better long term investment. While the new Sanctuary *did* solve all accessibility problems, the result was the old sanctuary became underused, then completely unused space. It hosted a nonprofit business (Expericenter) for about 4+/- years before they too outgrew the space. After that, the sanctuary was used for storage, and fell into serious disrepair. A major steeple leak caused part of the plaster ceiling to collapse, and the floors were water damaged as well.

During the COVID epidemic, the BOT injected some serious time and energy into restoring the meeting house. In 2019, Brian Brothers Painting (Piqua) was hired to repair and re-waterproof the steeple, and paint it. As the pandemic eased, the BOT executed several major meeting house repairs, including (a) replacement of the ceiling with drywall, (2) replacement of the lighting with all LED, and (3) refinishing of the floor. The entire meeting house was repainted and the interior windows trim painted. This restored the beauty and functionality of the original interior space, but it did NOT address the core issue of issue of accessibility. It also didn't address reconfiguring the room.

Recommendation 5: The first and most important challenge is to provide the ability to access this space through the original front entrance. This means getting bids to execute the following work:

- a. Obtain bids to install an all-weather wheelchair lift capability from the parking lot level to the level of the old sanctuary entrance. Such devices are common in old transit systems that relied on stair systems to move people from various levels. **This may include a significant redesign or replacement of the uneven flagstone steps and landings to meet ADA requirements.**
- b. Obtain bids to install a new handicap accessible double door entrance to the meeting house to include work to bring the top level of the steps up to the same level as the new entrance door. The combination of (i) and (ii) would allow mobility impaired individuals to get up to the meeting house level.

Recommendation 6: We need get 2 viable bids to install a single unisex restroom in the old meeting house narthex. The doors and fixtures would all be ADA compliant. There is both supply and drain piping available in the old kitchen below, so we do not believe this will be too difficult.

Recommendation 7: The current electrical panel for the meeting house is based on obsolete screw-in fuses. We need 2 bids to install new 60-100 Amp service panel with modern circuit breakers. This will also bring us up to current FIRE codes.

Recommendation 8: The exterior painted surfaces of the meeting house are in desperate need of repainting. This area probably hasn't been repainted since the 1970's or 1980's. The areas include all the exterior windows, the soffits, fascia boards, and (if not replaced in Recommendation 5(ii)), the white front doors.

General Site Cleaning and Improvements:

In many areas, the exterior of our church looks “dated, tired and unpleasing”. Updated signage was completed on July 13th 2026. There are three things we can do to spruce up the appearance apart from previous recommendations. These include:

- a. **Recommendation 9**: Power wash the exterior of the Fellowship hall, and re-caulk all windows.
- b. **Recommendation 10**: Solicit bids to replace the entry door into the kitchen. This door is hard to open, lock, and is rusty at the bottom. It also needs to be upgraded to be ADA compliant for exit purposes. The current door is so heavy, it may be hard to open in an emergency, and frequently jams.
- c. **Recommendation 11**: Solicit bids to update landscaping on the Gebhardt church side of the fellowship hall. Any new landscaping should be modern and low maintenance.
- d. **Recommendation 12**: Solicit bids to redo caulking on the 19 Fellowship hall windows, and minor brick pointing.
- e. **Recommendation 13**: Assess the condition of the parking lot, and potentially acquire bids for repair/repaint or resurfacing.

Final Plan for Council and Congregational Approval – 26 August 2026

Final Order of Priority: This section will attempt to balance the wants and needs of the 13 recommendations of this strategic plan. The balance will include the projected relative costs of each recommendation, and the preferred order to execute them. In addition, implementation should consider which improvements will have the best chance of enhancing our property to newcomers and other community service organizations in the short run, and what recommendations will best protect St John's from catastrophic system failures over time. Hence, the BOT believe the priorities for council *assuming independent of or somewhat unlimited budgets are as follows:*

Immediate Safety/Security Recommendations: (These are likely the lowest costs items.)

Recommendation 7: The current electrical panel for the meeting house is based on obsolete screw-in fuses. We need 2 bids to install new 60-100 Amp service panel with modern circuit breakers. This will also bring us up to current FIRE codes. **The cost of this repair was \$1,467 and has already been successfully executed using existing maintenance funding.**

Recommendation 10: Solicit bids to replace the entry door into the kitchen. This door is hard to open, lock, and is rusty at the bottom. It also needs to be upgraded to be ADA compliant for exit purposes. The current door is so heavy, it may be hard to open in an emergency. We are working to obtain 2 viable bids for this work.

Ascetic and Exterior Recommendations: (These are in order of likely costs.)

Recommendation 9: BOT to Power wash the exterior of the Fellowship hall. This is complete!

(Recommendation 12) The BOT will solicit 2 bids to re-caulk the windows.

Recommendation 11: Solicit bids to update landscaping on the Gebhardt church side of the fellowship hall. Any new landscaping should be modern and low maintenance. **Two bids were solicited, and the selected bidder (\$960) will begin work the week of 24 August.**

Recommendation 8: The exterior painted surfaces of the meeting house are in desperate need of repainting. This area probably hasn't been repainted since the 1970's or 1980's. The areas include all the exterior windows, the soffits, fascia boards, and (if not replaced in Recommendation 5(ii)), the white front doors. Three bids were obtained for this work, from Brian Brothers (Piqua), Ohio Paint Company (Centerville) and Litehouse Painting (Miamisburg). After a careful evaluation, **we are recommending Litehouse Painting (\$10,466.30) pending congregational donations.**

Recommendation 13: Assess the condition of the parking lot, and potentially acquire bids for repair/repaint or resurfacing. Bids will be solicited in the next 3 months to determine costs.

HVAC System Recommendations: (These are in order of likely costs.)

Recommendation 3: The BOD solicited 2 bids about 3 years ago to replace all the resistive units and the AC unit with a more efficient gas furnace and AC unit using the existing AC duct system. Gas is available in the elevator room, and would need to be routed to the closet in the nursery. However, given the use case for the Sunday school wing, the BOT decided a high efficiency heat pump was the appropriate replacement for the HVAC in this area. The BOD solicited and received bids from Korrek HVAC and Watkins HVAC. **The winning bid was from Korrek for \$16,855, and the BOT is recommending immediate execution pending donations into the Capital plan.**

Recommendation 2: The Board of Trustees recommends that two complete bids be solicited to proactively replace these units in the next calendar year based on funding availability. Based on previous HVAC work, we suggest bids by Watkins HVAC (Christian based bidder we've used with very high customer service ratings) and Korrek HVAC (Miamisburg).

Meeting House Accessibility: (These are in order of likely costs.)

Recommendation 6: We need get 2 viable bids to install a single unisex restroom in the old meeting house narthex. The doors and fixtures would all be ADA compliant. There is both supply and drain piping available in the old kitchen below, so we do not believe this will be too difficult.

Recommendation 5: The first and most important challenge is to provide the ability to access this space through the original front entrance. This means getting bids to execute the following work:

- a. Obtain bids to install an all-weather wheelchair lift capability from the parking lot level to the level of the old sanctuary entrance. Such devices are common in old transit systems that relied on stair systems to move people from various levels. **This may include a significant redesign or replacement of the uneven flagstone steps and landings to meet ADA requirements.**
- b. Obtain bids to install a new handicap accessible double door entrance to the meeting house to include work to bring the top level of the steps up to the same level as the new entrance door. The combination of (i) and (ii) would allow mobility impaired individuals to get up to the meeting house level.

How to Pay for Selected Improvements:

The costs of many of these recommendations are not currently definitive, but several will be substantial. However, it is clear that the finances of the annual maintenance and capital equipment lines would be insufficient to execute all but the least expensive recommendations. However, the BOT is also aware that some members may be willing to step forward with **substantial gifts** specifically attached to council renovation priorities. If the BOT doesn't get started on a capital improvement plan on a pre-emptive basis, some breakdowns or water damage issues could cause significant impacts to limited emergency funds.

The BOT is requesting council and the Congregation to provide a go-ahead to the following activities:

- (A) Approve the framework of our Capital plan and allow the BOT to present to the Congregation in an officially called meeting for that purpose.
- (B) Acquiring current bids on the highest priority items and winnowing down said bid to "best value" for the Congregation. Two major projects requesting immediate Congregational permission include (subject to special capital donations) are:
 - a. Repainting of the Meeting house
 - b. Replacement of Sunday School wing HVAC
- (C) Provide the Congregation with a brief summary of the extended plan, and projected costs to get started with early projects.
- (D) Provide feedback if there is donor appetite to fund some or all of these recommendations.
- (E) Approval by the Congregation would allow capital projects in this plan to proceed and be contracted for as capital funding becomes available.
- (F) Execute all work funded by a special donation fund established for long term capital improvements apart from our regular budget as donations are made against this capital fund.

In 1862, during a national war and hardship, this congregation decided to invest in the future, not sure what that future entailed. We are asking the Congregation's to help plan our future, and to assure our facility will be ready to support it. Making this investment sends a message to the community we're serious about hanging around and providing faith, outreach, and service well into our future.

Sincerely,

St John's Lutheran Church - Board of Trustees