

Sanctuary Refresh Questions

Financial

1. Does the church have to pay tax on capital gains?

No. The church is exempt from income taxes.

2. How much has been invested in developing these plans?

Over the last few years, we have spent \$61,481.49 on Sanctuary Refresh work. This includes \$21,026 on architectural design services (which includes the 3D renderings of our worship space), \$4,950 on an acoustical study, \$1,860 on sanctuary furnishings and \$33,646 on repairing two stained glass windows. We received designated gifts of \$31,000 for the window repair work. Total BLC expenses to date have been \$30,481.49.

3. Recently, in the Star, there was concern expressed for receipts being less than projected so far this year. Might we need the surplus that was mentioned to cover current operating expenses?

While the Council shared that our giving is lower than projections at this point in the year, it is also true that in recent years, due to changing giving patterns, it has become more difficult to predict where giving will end up for the year. Bethlehem's leadership has long practiced sound stewardship of the financial resources entrusted to us and, as a result, has sufficient savings in place to ensure that we meet our financial commitments in any given year. When we have seen that our spending plan is no longer sustainable without drawing on our financial reserves, we have decreased the size of our spending plan in order to better match anticipated receipts.

Following the movement of the Spirit is always an act of faith and we trust that God will walk with us as we discern this movement and provide for when we're engaged in faithful ministry, out of God's abundance. This is not just wishful thinking, it is the witness of scripture.

Chancel/Altar

4. Is the altar area going to be carpeted? What is the flooring plan for the chancel area?

The current images show a hard surface, but our suggestion would be to carpet the entire altar area. We've also discussed facing the vertical surfaces with wood to match the rest of the flooring.

5. Will there be a cushioned kneeler at the altar area (so needed)?

We have discussed this as a group. We would work with the flooring installer to talk about adding some kind of padding under the carpet.

Narthex

6. Will there only be one coat closet in the Narthex?

In past conversations with the congregation we heard concern about storage for chairs. In the event that our current storage cannot accommodate unused chairs, we may need to use one of the current coat closets as additional chair storage, at times.

Seating

7. Why are we removing all pews, instead of just flexible seating in the first few rows?

We have developed a plan that maximizes the flexibility of the sanctuary. As we think about future generations who will use this space, we want to provide them with greater flexibility than we currently have. Individual worship patterns and ways of worshipping have been changing in recent decades, not only at BLC but across the church, and flexible seating allows future generations multiple options of how to address these changes.

8. Who will be doing the moving of the flexible seating?

We have a Sexton on staff whose time can be utilized for simple seating shifts. When we need to make larger adjustments, we will need to work with the congregation to identify people who can assist with this task. This is what currently happens when we add additional seating for Christmas and Easter.

9. What will seating look like? How many chairs total and will any have arms?

We've included an image of the Unity chair that is made by Sauder. We've not yet selected the fabrication of chairs, but we would identify a wood finish and upholstery that coordinates with the existing sanctuary. In addition to coordinating with the existing space, we will prioritize durable materials. Our current plan includes a total of 174 chairs. We would plan to include some chairs throughout the space that have arms.

We are in conversation with flooring and chair manufacturers to identify the best way to protect floors from scratches and scuffs.

10. Can we vote on separated proposed areas with attached costs? (Like carpet, steps, etc)

The Sanctuary Refresh team has not yet developed the final proposal that will be brought before the congregation. The cottage meetings provide an important opportunity for people to share their thoughts and questions which will shape the final proposal that is brought to the congregation for a vote.

11. How is the seating capacity affected?

The seating capacity in the renderings that we've shared is 174. With bell choir tables removed, additional sanctuary seating could be added in that area. Our existing layout provides overflow seating in the Narthex, when needed. Over the last year our average worship attendance has been 103, with a range from 22 to 194 over the course of the year.

12. Can individual buy a chair as a memorial, etc? (like with hymnals)

We'll be working to create a fundraising plan as we approach the final proposal. This is a great idea!

13. What is the plan for disposal/reuse of the pews?

No final decision has been made. We have spoken about identifying another congregation that might purchase pews. We'd also like to explore the possibility of repurposing the wood in some of the existing pews to create some of the new elements in the sanctuary that will be needed. We're also aware that some congregations have used the wood in existing pews to create memorabilia that has been sold as part of fundraising efforts.

Accessibility

14. Will any hearing loop/devices be part of the improvements? Is there a plan for integration of hearing aids?

When Bob Stolze has looked into hearing loops, the cost has been estimated at \$10,000. (A hearing loop allows people with assistive hearing devices to loop into the existing sound system.) The time to do this work, would be when we are doing work on the floors. We've not yet reached a final plan for this.

15. What is the plan for improving the sound system beyond improving the sound on the livestream?

We have not yet finalized a plan. We use our space differently than we have in the past and our musical leadership has changed as well. We have not spent a lot of time on this because we need to make decisions about the rest of the sanctuary finishes before we can tackle sound issues, as any choices we make will be impacted by the final decisions. When we reach a final plan for the sanctuary, we will need to make enhancements to our sound system both for the people who participate in worship through our livestream as well as though who participate in person.

16. Can lighting be improved as well?

We have not addressed lighting in any of our existing plans.

Choir Loft

17. In the images shared, the view from the top of the steps at the door, the space between choir on the floor and chairs is pretty tight as it is now. Would the intention be to not place chairs to provide more space?

That particular image (View B) shows a pillar that does not exist and will not be added! That contributes to a sense of crowding in that image. The architect we've worked with has measured our space extensively and taken care to include ADA recommended clearances throughout the space.

General

18. How long will construction last?

In the original plans we shared in 2025, which included more reconstruction of the chancel area, the initial construction estimates were 12 weeks. We have yet to finalize a construction plan and so the length of time is unknown. We would hope to work with our construction team to phase the work to minimize disruption of our worship life.

19. Where will worship be during construction?

It will depend on the how the construction plan is developed and how the work can be phased. We'll know more once the construction plan is finalized.