Sanctuary Refresh Proposal

Since the beginning of this project, the Sanctuary Refresh Team has listened closely to the expressed needs of our congregation while prayerfully considering our needs for future ministry. We have heard from so many of you about how important the Sanctuary is to your participation in this community of faith and how deeply you care about maintaining elements that connect you to this space. We have also heard about concerns regarding the space supporting our needs as an ever-evolving congregation.

In this proposal, the Sanctuary Refresh Team has been guided by your feedback and our mission as a congregation to demonstrate in every way that: **You Matter: You are seen. You are known. You are loved.** We have sought to ensure our physical worship space provides what we need to both experience and communicate this essential message to every single person who walks through our doors – whether you are new here or have been here for decades.

Building on all that we have heard throughout this process, **we are now sharing a final proposal that has been moved by the BLC Council and will be voted on at the Annual Meeting on October 25 at 10:15am.** The full details of this proposal are attached (including renderings and blueprints of the proposed space), so that you have the opportunity to reflect and ask questions in advance of the vote. Having responded to the primary concerns that were raised in the original proposal, the council now recommends proceeding per our usual constitutional process requiring simple majority for adoption.

Discussion and questions are welcome at the Forum on October 18 at 10:15am or you may reach out to any member of the Sanctuary Refresh Team (Margie Gaul, Sandy Moczarski, Julie Owen, Bob Stolze, Toni Thompson, Pastor Hoffman and Pastor Amy).

Throughout our work, the Sanctuary Refresh Team has maintained that **our building is not simply a place we gather, but a gift to us from God that serves as a foundation for ministry, connection, belonging, hospitality, and service in the wider world**. We believe this plan reflects good stewardship of this significant gift in this time and place. We look forward to the ways that our refreshed space communicates to all who enter how deeply ***you matter***.

Background

The work of the Sanctuary Refresh Team began in response to the need to replace the flooring in the sanctuary, since the current carpeting is experiencing significant bubbling and poses a tripping hazard. Given that flooring is a substantial capital investment and we have not made meaningful changes to the Sanctuary since the early 1980s, the committee asked the pertinent questions:

- How is the space currently serving us in ministry?
- How have our needs changed since the last update to the Sanctuary?
- How does the space support our vision of building lasting community that follows Jesus?

Exploring these questions allowed us to identify the following opportunities:

- Better support logistics for our music ministry, an essential part of worship
- Provide easier access to the chancel and improving movement around the chancel, especially for people with mobility challenges
- Create more flexibility in the narthex and layout of the worship space so that we can more easily accommodate various types of gatherings and changing group sizes

Throughout our process, we have sought to listen carefully, because we need everyone's perspective to ensure our plan both addresses the needs of the current congregation and the anticipated needs of the future. We have also consulted with professionals (including an architect and a specialist in acoustics) to ensure our plan is both beautiful and functional. We brought an initial proposal to the congregation in May that was approved by over 69% of those who voted but failed to achieve the 75% needed to pass.

Following the cottage meetings and the special congregational meeting and vote process in May, the Sanctuary Refresh Team reviewed and reflected on feedback. We also sought direct input from the Chancel Choir regarding proposed changes to that portion of the proposal. We shared a revised proposal with the congregation in July and received additional feedback to fine-tune the proposed space around the organ to better accommodate musician's needs. While we could not incorporate every suggestion we heard, we sought to develop a cohesive plan that considered the varying needs and perspectives raised and aligns with our congregation's mission. This proposal builds on all that we have heard throughout this process.

Proposed Capital Expenditure

The following describes the elements of the proposal and cost estimate associated with each. *Please note:* all costs are estimates. The congregation will vote on the total proposed expenditure, not individual line items. Those are shared here for your information and understanding.

Flooring **$58,500**

- Replace all carpet in sanctuary with <u>hardwood</u> floors (not laminate) in keeping with the beauty and timelessness of the space
- Replace all carpet in the narthex and newly-expanded alcove
- Replacing flooring is a necessary capital expenditure given that our existing flooring is beyond its useful life

Painting **$28,400**

- Entire sanctuary, reflecting a necessary expense given normal wear and tear
- Alcove and walls affected by proposed construction in narthex

Sound Upgrades **$29,000**

- Replace sound equipment, including an upgraded mixer with automatic control to better accommodate the range of voices that need amplification and additional wireless microphones to better capture music for livestream
- Add hearing aid compatibility for the sound system, using Auracast or similar

Construction – Sanctuary **$30,000**

- Adding steps on each side of chancel with handrails to improve access to the chancel
- Utilizing historic pieces of furniture from BLC and reducing the size of the altar and the pulpit to improve flow of movement around the chancel among worship leaders
- Adding a third level to the choir loft with handrail so the space is both accessible and more conducive to conducting
- Reshaping the organ platform so it is more conducive both to the location of the piano and special music
- See attached renderings/blueprints

Construction – Narthex **$22,000**

- Remove wall between library and the additional room that was part of the former nursery to enlarge the alcove and expose an additional stained glass window. This space may provide a small seating area during coffee hour, be used for informal or small group meetings, and generally provide another flexible space to accommodate groups or activities.
- See attached renderings/blueprints

Seating **$44,000**

- Shorten existing pew length and increase distance between pews to allow for easier access in and out of pews, especially for those who are sitting in the middle and may need to excuse themselves during worship. Proposal also includes angling the pews slightly to provide better viewing of the chancel and a more connected feel among the congregation.
- Add chairs to end of the pews to provide additional flexibility as needed, including for those who may need space for assistive devices (e.g., walkers or wheelchairs)
- Replace existing first two rows of pews with seating –individual chairs or bench seating – to provide additional flexibility, especially to accommodate occasional events like funerals with a casket present, special music groups that need additional space in front of the chancel, or small, intimate gatherings that may benefit from chairs angled differently
- See attached blueprint

Contingency	**$28,100**
• Recommended contingency for construction projects is 10-15% of total cost	
Total Proposed Cost:	**$240,000**

Available Funds

The people of God at Bethlehem have given generously over the years to ministry within and beyond our walls. We have also been good stewards of the financial resources entrusted to us and have set aside some dollars in anticipation of capital needs. The Capital Reserve specifically includes money set aside for regular capital expenditures, such as painting and flooring, while preserving a healthy balance for other anticipated needs in the future. Council proposes the following allocation of existing funds towards the Sanctuary Refresh Plan:

Reserves		**$70,000**
	2024 Surplus	*$28,000*
	2025 Surplus	*$17,000*
	Capital Reserve Fund	*$25,000*
Realized Capital Gains		**$50,000**
	Total Available Funds:	**$120,000**

Capital Appeal

If approved, **the congregation will need to raise $120,000 through a Capital Appeal** in addition to our regular annual giving to fund the Sanctuary Refresh proposal. We anticipate starting a Capital Appeal immediately following an affirmative vote so that work can be scheduled over Summer 2027. While the proposed motion does not include a stipulation for commitments in hand before work can be scheduled, Council will closely monitor the response to the Appeal before making binding commitments with contractors.

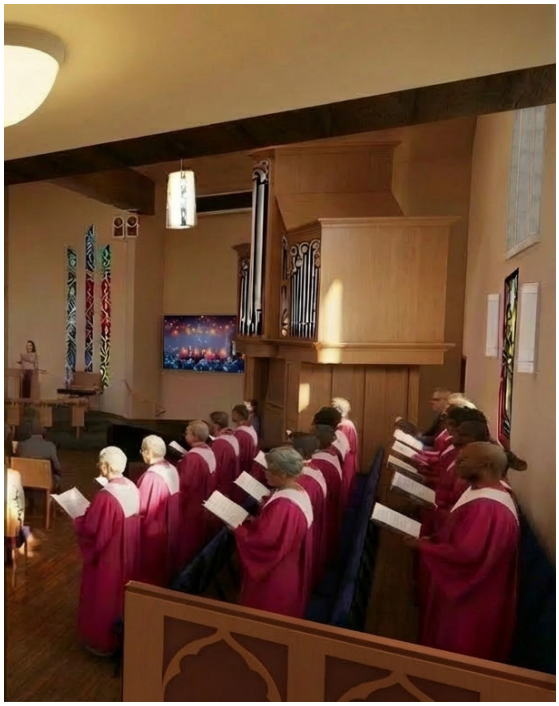
Renderings and Blueprints



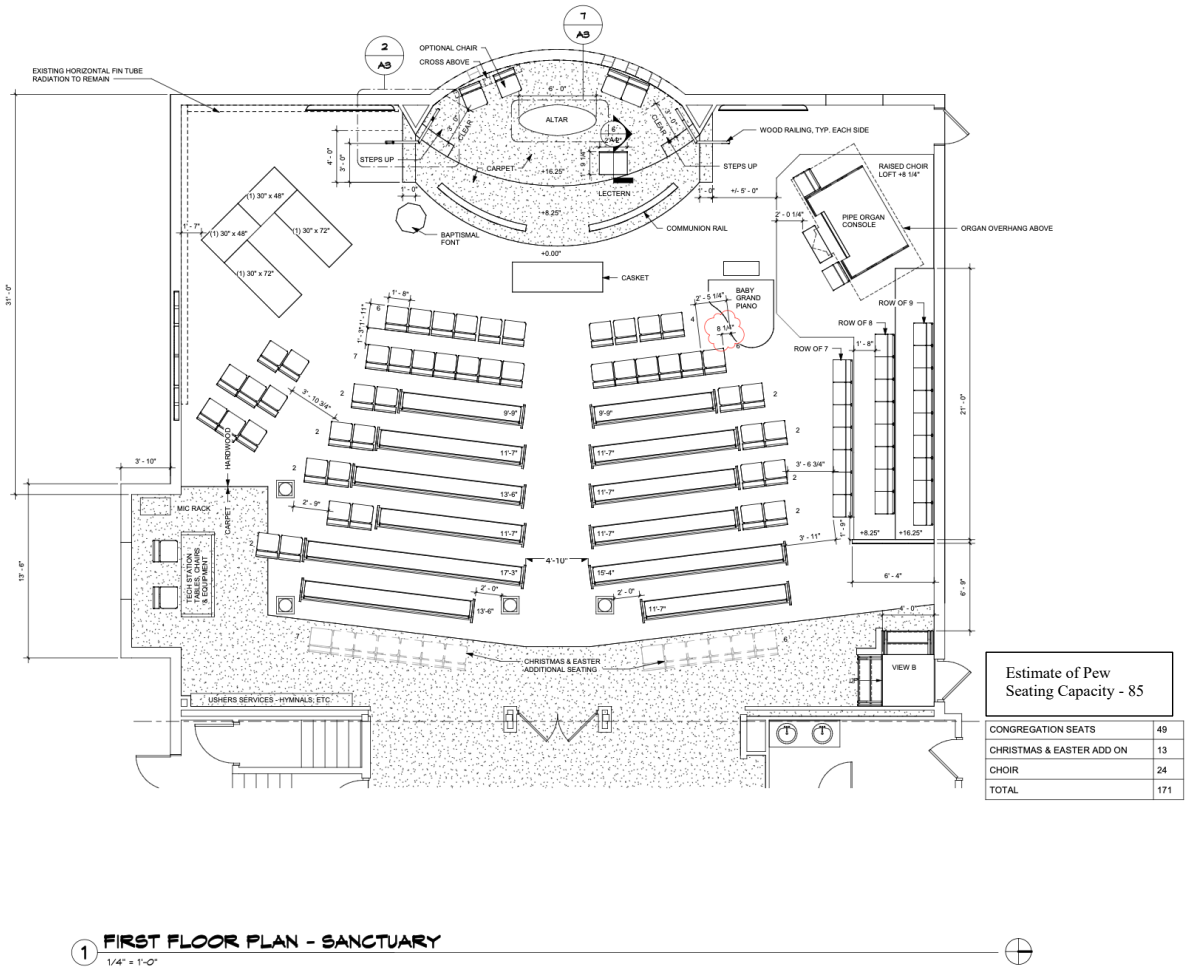
Rendering of proposed steps with handrail to improve accessibility of chancel.



Rendering of proposed changes to altar and pulpit, using historic materials from Bethlehem's previous worship spaces.

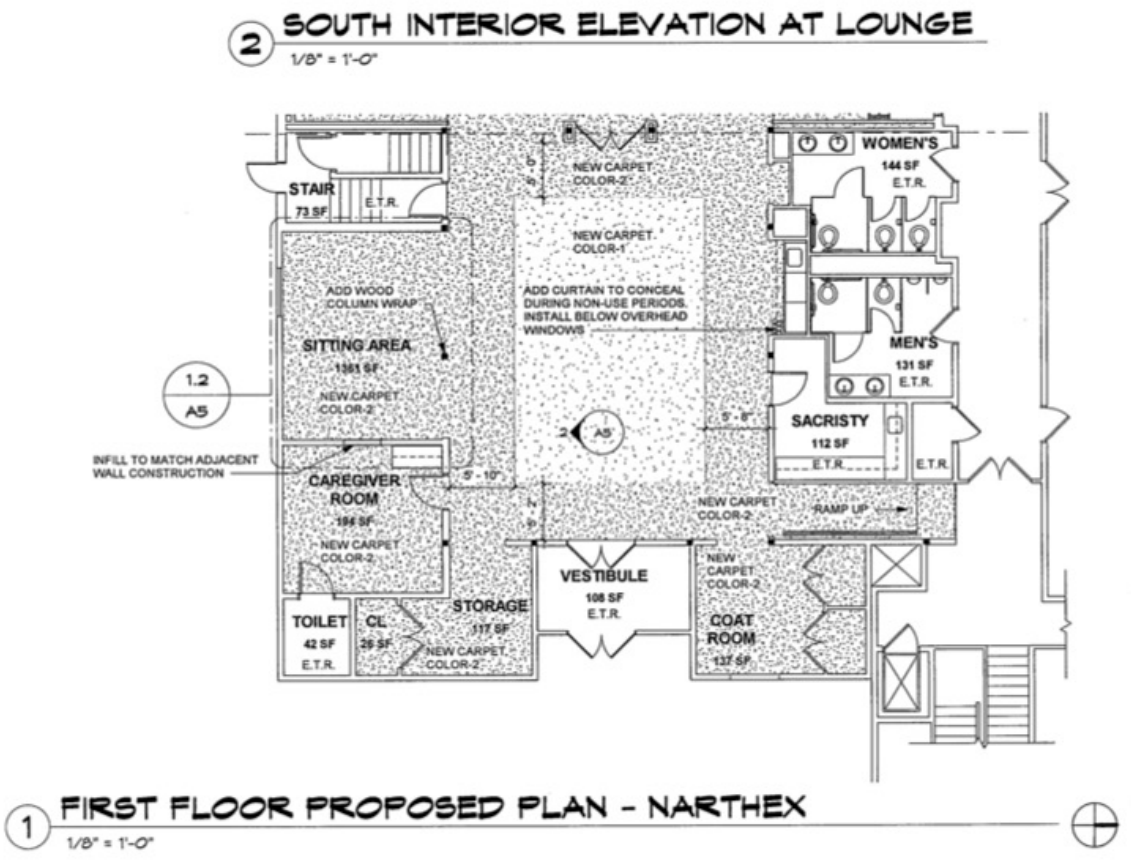


Rendering of proposed new choir loft, including a side wall with handrail to access upper two levels.



1 FIRST FLOOR PLAN - SANCTUARY
1/4" = 1'-0"

Blueprint of proposed hybrid seating arrangement including pews and chairs. Note that pews are slightly angled and spaced further apart to allow for more movement with flexible seating on the ends that can be removed as needed to accommodate people or different types of gatherings. The bottleneck noted on this drawing will be removed as the piano will be positioned closer to the chancel wall.



Blueprint with proposed changes to the narthex, including wall removal to create larger alcove.