

## **Pilgrim Building Project Update – 6.3.26**

### **Listening, Learning, and Planning for the Future**

Dear Pilgrim Family,

Over the past several months, the Building Steering Committee has continued the work entrusted to us by Church Council: listening, learning, researching, and planning for the future ministry needs of Pilgrim Lutheran Church and School.

While no final building designs have been selected and no construction decisions have been made, the project has reached an important stage. Through congregational surveys, listening sessions, church tours, consultant meetings, architectural interviews, and extensive research, we are beginning to develop a much clearer understanding of what our congregation values most and what kinds of facilities may best support Gospel ministry in the decades ahead.

This project did not begin with floor plans or architectural renderings. It began with a desire to understand who we are as a congregation, what ministry opportunities God is placing before us, and how our facilities can best support that mission. For that reason, much of the committee's work during the past several months has focused on learning and listening. We have studied previous planning efforts, visited churches, met with acoustical consultants, engaged design professionals, explored educational opportunities, researched music ministry needs, and most importantly, listened carefully to the congregation.

One of the themes that has emerged repeatedly throughout this process is that Pilgrim is blessed with tremendous momentum. Worship attendance remains strong. The school and preschool continue to grow. New families continue to find Pilgrim. Existing ministries continue to expand. The opportunities before us are exciting, but they also require thoughtful planning. The purpose of this project is not simply to construct a building. It is to ensure that our facilities continue supporting the ministry opportunities God is placing before us both now and in the future.

As we reflect on the work completed so far, one conclusion continues to stand out. The congregation is not simply asking for a larger building. Members are asking for a sacred, welcoming, beautiful, durable, and mission-focused home for Word and Sacrament ministry, Christian education, fellowship, outreach, and worship for future generations.

### **What We Heard from the Congregation**

One of the most important goals established by the Steering Committee from the very beginning was ensuring that the congregation would have meaningful opportunities to shape the planning process.

Many members have experienced building projects elsewhere. Some have seen situations where decisions seemed predetermined before feedback was requested. Others expressed concern that a small group of leaders might unintentionally make assumptions that do not reflect the broader congregation. Those concerns were heard clearly by the committee.

Because of that, the committee committed early to listening before designing.

The first major step was a congregation-wide survey. Nearly one hundred members participated. The survey was intentionally designed not to ask questions about architectural styles, colors, or floor plans. Instead, it focused on values. What should a future sanctuary feel like? What aspects of Pilgrim should be preserved? What concerns exist regarding a future project? What opportunities should be considered for both church and school ministry?

The survey produced several important findings.

First, support for continuing the exploration process was remarkably strong. More than eighty percent of respondents indicated they were very supportive of continuing to study future facility needs. At the same time, members consistently communicated the importance of transparency, thoughtful stewardship, and regular communication throughout the process.

Second, the survey clearly identified several priorities that consistently ranked near the top. Members overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of clear proclamation of God's Word, strong visibility of Word and Sacrament, excellent acoustics, accessibility, hospitality, congregational singing, and planning that supports future ministry growth. Financial stewardship was certainly important, but members repeatedly prioritized worship quality, long-term durability, and ministry effectiveness over simply minimizing cost.

The survey also revealed something deeper.

When asked how a future sanctuary should feel, members most often selected words such as warm and welcoming, spiritually grounding, reverent, peaceful, uplifting, and beautiful. Very few people expressed a desire for highly contemporary or trendy environments. Instead, members consistently described a desire for a sanctuary that communicates permanence, sacred purpose, and Christian identity.

Following the survey, the committee organized a series of listening sessions involving longtime members, newer members, school families, young adults, middle school students, and ministry leaders. These sessions allowed participants to elaborate on their thoughts and explain not only what they valued, but why.

Perhaps the most surprising outcome of these conversations was the degree of agreement across generations.

We expected older members to value tradition more strongly than younger members. We expected younger members to advocate for more contemporary environments. We expected school families to focus on different concerns than retirees. Instead, we discovered broad alignment.

Across nearly every group, participants described Pilgrim using words such as welcoming, relational, family-oriented, authentic, caring, and friendly. Many members shared that they originally chose Pilgrim not because of the facilities but because of the people. Several participants specifically stated that whatever happens with future facilities, Pilgrim's culture should remain intact.

Again and again, members emphasized that while buildings matter, people are what make Pilgrim special.

One of the strongest themes involved the sanctuary itself.

Members consistently described their desire for a worship space that feels sacred, reverent, peaceful, timeless, and unmistakably church-like. There was widespread concern about church designs that resemble theaters, conference centers, entertainment venues, or generic multipurpose spaces. Participants repeatedly emphasized that the sanctuary should visibly communicate its purpose as a place where God's people gather around Word and Sacrament.

The words sacred and timeless surfaced repeatedly.

Many members expressed appreciation for architecture that reflects permanence rather than trends. Natural materials such as wood and stone were frequently mentioned. Participants consistently expressed appreciation for Christian symbolism, meaningful artwork, beautiful lighting, stained glass, banners, paraments, and visual elements that reinforce Lutheran worship and teach the faith.

The altar, cross, pulpit, and baptismal font generated especially strong discussion. Members repeatedly emphasized that these should remain visually prominent and central to worship. Many participants expressed a desire for a more visible baptismal font, reflecting the importance of Baptism in Lutheran theology and identity. Several suggested locating the font in a position that regularly reminds worshippers of their baptismal identity as they enter or participate in worship.

One of the strongest areas of consensus involved seating.

Across nearly every age group, participants expressed a preference for pews. Older members supported pews. School families supported pews. Young adults supported pews. Even middle school students repeatedly expressed a preference for pews.

The reasons varied but shared common themes. Many felt pews communicate permanence and sacred purpose. Others noted that pews naturally encourage families to sit together. Some described pews as visually reinforcing that

the sanctuary is a worship space rather than a multipurpose room. More than one participant simply remarked that pews "feel like church."

While some flexibility through chairs in limited locations was generally viewed as acceptable, the overwhelming preference remained for pews throughout most of the sanctuary.

Another major theme involved intimacy.

Members consistently expressed appreciation for the current sanctuary's sense of closeness. Even those who support future growth emphasized that they do not want worshippers to feel distant from the altar, pulpit, or worship leaders. Many favored seating layouts that allow strong visibility and participation while preserving the relational atmosphere that currently exists at Pilgrim.

The committee also spent significant effort listening to younger members.

The young adult listening session produced some of the most surprising and encouraging insights of the entire process.

Rather than advocating for highly contemporary architecture or entertainment-oriented worship environments, many young adults expressed strong support for traditional Lutheran worship, sacred architecture, organ-led music, visible Christian symbolism, and timeless design. Several participants specifically stated that they wanted a sanctuary that feels distinctly different from the rest of daily life.

Many spoke about living in a world filled with temporary experiences, digital interactions, constant change, and rapidly shifting cultural trends. Within that environment, they expressed appreciation for permanence, authenticity, beauty, and sacredness.

Several young adults commented that they wanted future generations to experience a sanctuary that immediately communicates, "This is a church."

The middle school student session revealed many of the same themes.

Students consistently emphasized the importance of visibility, participation, reverence, and music. They appreciated stained glass, Christian symbolism, strong congregational singing, and spaces that feel welcoming without becoming casual. Several students also demonstrated surprising awareness of practical issues such as acoustics, distractions, lighting, and worship flow.

Perhaps most encouraging, younger generations were not asking for less sacredness or less Lutheran identity. In many cases, they were asking for more.

Music generated some of the richest discussion throughout the listening process.

Participants repeatedly identified music as one of Pilgrim's greatest strengths. Congregational singing, choir leadership, organ music, piano accompaniment, brass ensembles, orchestral instruments, student musicians, worship teams, guitars, percussion, and special music throughout the church year were all mentioned positively by members across age groups.

Importantly, these conversations were rarely framed as traditional versus contemporary worship.

Instead, members consistently emphasized participation.

Whether discussing organ music, choirs, piano, guitars, drums, brass ensembles, worship teams, or orchestral instruments, participants consistently expressed the desire for music that supports congregational singing and proclaims God's Word. Members generally viewed these various musical expressions not as competitors, but as different tools that can be used appropriately to serve worship.

Several listening session participants specifically commented that one of Pilgrim's strengths is the variety of musical gifts present within the congregation. Members expressed appreciation for hearing different ensembles and instruments throughout the church year and encouraged the committee to think about how future facilities can continue supporting this breadth of ministry.

Hospitality and fellowship emerged as another major theme.

Members repeatedly described Pilgrim as warm, welcoming, and relational. Many shared that some of their most meaningful experiences at Pilgrim occurred before or after worship services rather than during formal programs. Conversations in the narthex, welcoming visitors, supporting one another through challenges, and simply spending time together were all viewed as important parts of Pilgrim's culture.

As a result, participants consistently expressed support for gathering spaces that encourage relationships. Frequently mentioned ideas included coffee areas, fireplaces, high-top tables, comfortable seating clusters, welcoming entrances, improved restroom access, and spaces where people naturally linger after worship.

At the same time, members also emphasized the importance of preserving reverence within the sanctuary. Several participants noted that they appreciate opportunities for prayer, meditation, and quiet reflection before worship and would like future facilities to better balance active fellowship with sacred preparation.

Accessibility generated significant discussion as well.

Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of hearing assistance technology, wider aisles, family accommodations, accessible restrooms, safer parking and drop-off areas, wheelchair integration, and accommodations for hidden disabilities or sensory sensitivities. Members encouraged the committee to think beyond minimum building code requirements and instead focus on creating a campus that is genuinely welcoming for people of all ages and abilities.

The listening sessions also generated substantial discussion regarding the school.

Members consistently described Pilgrim Lutheran School as one of the congregation's most important outreach ministries. Participants repeatedly emphasized that church and school planning should occur together rather than separately. Suggestions included additional classrooms, preschool expansion, one classroom per grade level, STEM and robotics spaces, tutoring areas, teacher collaboration spaces, music and arts space, and future educational flexibility.

Many members specifically noted that the school serves as one of the primary pathways through which families become connected to the church.

Finally, one phrase surfaced so frequently that it deserves special mention.

Again and again, members said:

"Do it right the first time."

Participants connected this idea to acoustics, infrastructure, accessibility, maintenance, flexibility, stewardship, and long-term ministry effectiveness. While many people expressed understandable concerns about finances and debt, the overwhelming sentiment was not opposition to the project itself. Rather, members consistently encouraged careful planning, transparency, responsible stewardship, and decisions that will serve future generations well.

If there is one message the Steering Committee hopes members take away from this process, it is this:

Your voice has been heard.

Not every comment points in the same direction. Not every suggestion can ultimately be incorporated. But the consistency of the feedback has been remarkable, and the themes that emerged from the listening process are already shaping the conversations taking place with architects, consultants, musicians, educators, and planners.

The congregation has provided far more than opinions about a building.

You have helped articulate a vision for the future ministry of Pilgrim Lutheran Church and School.

# Acoustics and the Worship Environment

As the committee moved deeper into conversations about worship, music, and sanctuary design, one topic repeatedly surfaced from nearly every direction: acoustics.

At first glance, acoustics may seem like a highly technical subject. Many people think of acoustics primarily in terms of microphones, speakers, or music. What the committee quickly discovered, however, is that acoustics influence virtually every aspect of worship.

Acoustics affect how clearly sermons can be heard. They influence how confidently a congregation sings. They impact whether Scripture readings are understandable throughout the room. They affect weddings, funerals, school chapel services, choir performances, instrumental music, and even the emotional experience of worship itself.

In many ways, acoustics are invisible. Most people notice poor acoustics immediately but rarely think about good acoustics when they are present. Yet the sound of a room shapes every service that takes place within it.

One of the most valuable parts of the committee's work over the past year involved visiting churches and learning from the experiences of other congregations.

Again and again, church leaders shared stories about decisions they wished had made differently. Some churches regretted not involving an acoustical consultant early enough in the design process. Others described spending significant amounts of money attempting to solve problems after construction was completed. Several congregations noted that acoustics were among the most important aspects of their building project and, unfortunately, one of the easiest things to overlook.

The committee visited sanctuaries that were visually beautiful but acoustically disappointing. Some rooms felt lifeless because too much sound absorption had been incorporated into the design. Others suffered from noisy HVAC systems that could be heard throughout worship. In some cases, large speaker systems dominated the room visually because they were being asked to compensate for acoustical challenges that could have been addressed architecturally.

These visits reinforced an important lesson:

Acoustics cannot simply be added later.

The shape of the room, ceiling height, wall materials, flooring choices, seating materials, mechanical systems, and speaker placement all work together to determine how a sanctuary sounds.

Because of this, the Music Subcommittee strongly recommended that an acoustical consultant be engaged early in the planning process. The Steering Committee agreed and began discussions with Kirkegaard Associates, one of the nation's most respected acoustical consulting firms.

In May, members of the Steering Committee met with Joseph Myers of Kirkegaard Associates for an extended discussion regarding worship spaces and sanctuary acoustics.

The conversation covered much more than microphones and speakers.

Kirkegaard's work focuses on four major areas:

- Room acoustics
- Audio system design
- Noise control
- Noise isolation

Room acoustics involve the shape, size, and materials of the sanctuary itself. Audio system design focuses on ensuring that sound reinforcement supports the room rather than compensates for poor design. Noise control

addresses unwanted sounds from HVAC systems, plumbing, electrical equipment, and other building systems. Noise isolation focuses on preventing sounds from other areas of the building from interfering with worship.

This final point generated significant interest because it directly connected with feedback received during the listening sessions.

Throughout the listening process, members consistently expressed two desires that initially seemed somewhat contradictory.

First, they wanted expanded gathering spaces, coffee areas, hospitality opportunities, and fellowship environments that encourage people to stay and build relationships.

Second, they wanted the sanctuary to remain a sacred and contemplative space where people can pray, reflect, and prepare for worship.

Many members specifically mentioned that sound from gathering areas currently travels into the sanctuary before worship. Several expressed a desire for stronger separation between active fellowship spaces and the worship environment.

Kirkegaard explained that these goals are not mutually exclusive.

Through careful design of walls, ceilings, doors, circulation patterns, and acoustical treatments, it is possible to create a vibrant gathering environment while still preserving quiet and reverence within the sanctuary.

This observation strongly reinforced feedback from the congregation.

Throughout the listening sessions, members consistently emphasized that they value both hospitality and reverence.

They do not want to choose between them.

They want both.

The committee also learned that HVAC systems are often among the greatest contributors to unwanted sanctuary noise.

Many church members may not realize how much effort goes into creating quiet ventilation systems. Yet virtually every acoustical consultant, architect, and church leader the committee spoke with emphasized the importance of addressing mechanical noise early in the design process.

This lesson surfaced repeatedly during church visits. More than one congregation described HVAC noise as one of the most significant regrets from their building project.

Because of this, controlling mechanical noise has become one of the committee's priorities as planning moves forward.

Another major discussion involved reverberation.

Reverberation is the persistence of sound within a room after the source has stopped. Too little reverberation can make worship feel lifeless and dry. Too much reverberation can make speech difficult to understand.

The challenge is finding the right balance.

The congregation consistently expressed a desire for strong congregational singing, clear speech, and warm musical resonance. Those goals align closely with the recommendations received from Kirkegaard and other experts.

Members frequently described wanting a sanctuary that encourages singing.

That phrase surfaced repeatedly.

People want to hear one another sing.

They want hymns to fill the room.

They want worshippers to feel comfortable participating rather than simply listening.

This has become one of the most important acoustical goals being discussed.

The objective is not simply to create a room that sounds impressive.

The objective is to create a room that encourages participation.

The committee's current acoustical goals include:

- Clear speech intelligibility throughout the sanctuary.
- Strong support for congregational singing.
- Warm and natural musical resonance.
- Quiet HVAC and building systems.
- Effective hearing assistance technology.
- Discreet sound systems.
- Architectural acoustics that support worship rather than compete with it.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned so far is that acoustics are not merely a technical issue.

They are a ministry issue.

Every sermon, every hymn, every choir anthem, every baptism, every wedding, every funeral, and every chapel service will take place within the acoustical environment created by the building.

The committee believes that investing time and energy into understanding acoustics now will help ensure that future generations inherit a worship space that supports participation, clarity, beauty, and the proclamation of God's Word.

## **Music Ministry and Instrument Planning**

Music occupies a special place in the life of Pilgrim Lutheran Church.

Whether through congregational singing, choirs, piano, organ, brass ensembles, orchestral instruments, worship teams, guitars, percussion, student musicians, or special services throughout the church year, music has long been one of the ways our congregation proclaims the Gospel, teaches the faith, and joins together in praise.

Because of the importance of music within Pilgrim's ministry, the Building Steering Committee formed a Music Subcommittee early in the planning process. The purpose of the group was not to advocate for a particular worship style or make final decisions regarding instruments. Rather, the committee was asked to study how a future sanctuary can best support the full breadth of Pilgrim's music ministry for generations to come.

Throughout these discussions, one theme emerged repeatedly:

Pilgrim has been blessed with a broad and vibrant music ministry.

The Music Subcommittee has spent considerable time examining how music functions within worship today and how future facilities can best support that ministry. Rather than beginning with assumptions about instruments or styles, the group focused on understanding the role music plays in supporting congregational participation, proclaiming God's Word, and enriching worship throughout the church year.

One of the most encouraging findings from both the listening sessions and the Music Subcommittee's work is that members consistently expressed appreciation for the diversity of musical leadership that currently exists at Pilgrim.

Participants spoke positively about congregational singing, choir leadership, organ music, piano accompaniment, brass ensembles, orchestral instruments, student musicians, worship teams, guitars, bass guitar, percussion, and special music throughout the church year.

Importantly, these conversations were rarely framed as traditional versus contemporary worship.

Instead, members repeatedly emphasized participation.

Whether discussing organ music, choirs, piano, guitars, drums, brass ensembles, worship teams, or orchestral instruments, participants consistently expressed the desire for music that supports congregational singing and proclaims God's Word.

Members generally viewed these various musical expressions not as competitors, but as different tools that can be used appropriately to serve worship.

Several listening session participants specifically commented that one of Pilgrim's strengths is the variety of musical gifts present within the congregation. Members expressed appreciation for hearing different ensembles and instruments throughout the church year and encouraged the committee to think about how future facilities can continue supporting this breadth of ministry.

As planning has progressed, this has led to discussions regarding flexible music areas within the sanctuary.

Rather than creating a space optimized for only one type of ensemble, the committee has been exploring concepts that can accommodate choirs, orchestral musicians, worship teams, guitars, bass guitar, percussion, piano, organ, student musicians, and other musical groups as needed.

Several participants specifically mentioned the importance of providing adequate space for larger instrumental ensembles and school musicians. Others emphasized the need for flexible choir space capable of supporting different ensemble sizes throughout the year.

The Music Subcommittee has also discussed practical considerations including music storage, rehearsal needs, instrument locations, circulation patterns, and sightlines within the sanctuary. While these details may seem small, they significantly affect how effectively musicians can serve during worship.

One particularly interesting observation from the listening sessions was that many contemporary musicians strongly supported the emphasis on acoustics.

Several participants who regularly play guitar, bass, percussion, or other contemporary instruments expressed strong support for the acoustical goals being developed with Kirkegaard. They recognized that good acoustics benefit every style of worship music.

A room that supports congregational singing, clear speech, piano, choir, organ, guitars, drums, brass, and orchestral instruments ultimately serves the entire congregation.

This realization has helped shape the committee's philosophy moving forward.

The objective is not to design a sanctuary around one musical style.

The objective is to design a sanctuary around worship itself.

The Music Subcommittee's work remains ongoing and will continue throughout future phases of the project. As architects, acousticians, organ consultants, and other design professionals become involved, the committee will continue helping ensure that Pilgrim's worship and music ministry needs are represented in the planning process.

Their role is not merely to think about instruments.

Their role is to help ensure that the future sanctuary supports congregational participation, musical excellence, and the proclamation of God's Word for many years to come.

# Pipe Organ Research, Stewardship, and Why This Work Is Happening Now

As discussions about sanctuary acoustics and music ministry progressed, the Steering Committee quickly discovered that the question of a future organ could not simply be postponed until later in the process.

Many members understandably assume that instruments are among the last decisions made during a building project. In most cases, that is true. A piano, drum set, music stands, or other instruments can often be selected after a building is complete. A pipe organ, however, is fundamentally different.

A pipe organ is not something that is simply purchased and placed into a completed room. It becomes part of the room itself. Its location affects room dimensions, structural design, electrical systems, mechanical systems, acoustics, visual aesthetics, and even the overall architectural composition of the sanctuary. Because of this, many experienced church architects, acousticians, and organ builders recommend that organ planning begin years before construction is complete.

Recognizing this reality, the Music Subcommittee began studying organ planning early in the process. Their work has included discussions with organ builders across North America, consultation with preservation experts, evaluation of both new and used instruments, and extensive research regarding costs, timelines, long-term stewardship considerations, and how a future organ might support Pilgrim's worship philosophy.

One of the most important discoveries was that the pipe organ world operates on a very different timeline than most people realize. Many respected organ builders currently maintain waiting lists measured in years rather than months.

In addition, opportunities involving historically significant used instruments often appear unexpectedly and may only remain available for a short period of time. Unlike many building materials or equipment purchases, a congregation cannot simply decide to acquire a particular instrument whenever it becomes convenient. In some cases, waiting until architectural plans are complete may mean missing opportunities altogether.

This realization shifted the committee's thinking.

Rather than asking, "Should we buy an organ?" the more appropriate question became:

"What should we understand now so that future decisions can be made wisely?"

The committee's research also revealed that pipe organs occupy a unique place within Christian worship.

For centuries, the organ has served as one of the primary instruments supporting congregational singing. Unlike most instruments, a pipe organ was specifically developed to lead large groups of people in song. Its sound fills a room differently than amplified instruments because the sound originates from many physical locations throughout the sanctuary rather than from a small number of speakers.

Many participants in the listening sessions commented on the emotional and spiritual connection they feel to organ music. Others emphasized the role the organ plays in supporting congregational singing and reinforcing the sacred atmosphere of worship. At the same time, members consistently expressed appreciation for the many other instruments used throughout Pilgrim's worship life. This reinforced the committee's desire to avoid treating the conversation as an either-or decision.

The goal has never been to choose between organ music and other forms of musical leadership.

The goal has been to understand how all of these elements can work together within a future sanctuary.

## Pipe Organ vs. Digital Organ

One topic that naturally emerged from this research was the distinction between pipe organs and digital organs.

The committee recognizes that both can support worship and that faithful Lutheran churches successfully use both approaches. However, the research revealed several important differences worth understanding.

A digital organ produces sound through speakers using recorded samples and electronic technology. Modern digital instruments have improved dramatically over the last several decades and can provide excellent musical results. They require less space, involve lower initial costs, and offer considerable flexibility.

A pipe organ produces sound physically through hundreds or thousands of individual pipes distributed throughout the room. Air passes through the pipes, creating sound that interacts naturally with the architecture and acoustics of the sanctuary.

Because the sound originates throughout the room itself, pipe organs create a sense of depth, presence, and warmth that many believe cannot be fully replicated through speakers alone.

The committee's research also highlighted significant differences in longevity.

Most digital organs rely on electronics, computers, amplifiers, and software systems that eventually become obsolete. Like most technology, they require periodic replacement and upgrading.

A well-maintained pipe organ, by contrast, can serve a congregation for generations. There are pipe organs built centuries ago that continue leading worship today. While maintenance and restoration are certainly required over time, the basic instrument itself can remain functional for extraordinarily long periods.

This discussion naturally led to broader conversations about stewardship.

### **Typical Pipe Organ Cost Tiers Worldwide (2026 USD)**

| <b>Instrument Type</b>            | <b>Typical Cost (USD)</b> | <b>Notes</b>                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Small chapel organ                | \$150K–\$750K             | Small churches, chapels          |
| Mid-size church organ             | \$1.1M–\$2.5M             | Pilgrim's target range           |
| Large cathedral organ             | \$3M–\$10M                | Major diocesan/city projects     |
| International concert hall organs | \$10M–\$25M+              | Extremely rare prestige projects |
| Monumental flagship organs        | \$25M–\$60M+              | Notre Dame, Disney Hall class    |

Restoration of used organs can save the congregation 10% - 35% off the cost of new depending on a variety of factors.

A pipe organ representing approximately 10–15% of a church building project's total cost is quite common.

The committee is not interested in pursuing a pipe organ simply because it is traditional. The question is whether a pipe organ represents a wise long-term investment in worship ministry. That question remains part of the ongoing discussion.

### **The Search for Expertise**

As the committee's research became more detailed, another realization emerged.

The congregation needed knowledgeable guidance.

Organ planning involves acoustics, architecture, structural engineering, musical design, restoration considerations, budgeting, and long-term maintenance planning. Very few congregations possess that expertise internally.

For that reason, the Music Subcommittee spent considerable time evaluating organ consultants and builders.

Following months of study, the subcommittee unanimously recommended engaging Bruce Case as an organ planning consultant.

Bruce brings extensive experience working with both new and historic instruments. More importantly, his planning philosophy aligns closely with many of the values identified throughout Pilgrim's listening process.

He emphasizes stewardship.

He values collaboration between architects, acousticians, and musicians.

He focuses on long-term durability rather than short-term solutions.

He understands the importance of designing instruments that support congregational singing.

And he approaches planning as a ministry discussion rather than merely a technical exercise.

It is important to emphasize that the recommendation to engage Bruce Case is not a recommendation to purchase an organ.

Rather, it is a recommendation to engage an experienced advisor who can help the congregation make informed decisions during future planning phases.

### **Historic Organ Opportunities**

One example illustrates why this expertise may prove valuable.

Recently, Bruce informed the committee of an opportunity involving a historic Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ located in Houston, Texas. No decisions have been made regarding this instrument. However, the opportunity provided an educational experience for the committee and helped illustrate how the organ market operates.

The instrument in question was built during what many organ historians consider the golden era of American organ building. It was designed under the leadership of G. Donald Harrison and later refined through the tonal finishing work of Roy Perry, both highly respected figures within the organ world.

As committee members researched these instruments, they discovered that many historic organs contain materials, craftsmanship, and tonal characteristics that would be extraordinarily expensive to replicate today.

In some cases, acquiring and restoring an existing instrument can provide musical and architectural value that would be difficult to achieve through entirely new construction.

At the same time, the committee learned that used organs come with challenges.

- Relocation costs.

- Restoration requirements.

- Storage considerations.

- Adaptation to a new sanctuary.

- Long-term maintenance planning.

- Not every historic instrument is a good fit.

- Not every opportunity should be pursued.

The experience reinforced the importance of having knowledgeable guidance available as future opportunities arise.

### **Why This Matters**

Perhaps the most important conclusion from all of this research is that organ planning is not really about pipes, mechanics, or specifications. It is about worship. It is about understanding how architecture, acoustics, congregational singing, musical leadership, and visual design work together to support the proclamation of God's Word.

Whether the congregation ultimately chooses a new instrument, a restored historic instrument, a digital instrument, or some combination of approaches, the work being done today is helping ensure that future decisions are informed, thoughtful, and aligned with the ministry goals of Pilgrim Lutheran Church.

The committee views this research as another example of the broader philosophy that has guided the project from the beginning.

Listen carefully.

Learn thoroughly.

Explore options.

Avoid premature decisions.

And make future choices from a position of knowledge rather than urgency.

That approach will continue guiding the committee as planning moves forward.

## **Hospitality, Fellowship, and Gathering Spaces**

If worship emerged as one of the strongest themes throughout the listening process, hospitality and fellowship were not far behind.

Again and again, members described Pilgrim as warm, welcoming, relational, and family-oriented. In fact, many participants shared that the reason they first became connected to Pilgrim had little to do with the building itself. Instead, they spoke about people who greeted them, welcomed them, invited them to activities, introduced them to others, or simply made them feel at home.

That observation became increasingly important as the committee reflected on future facility planning. Buildings do not create relationships. People create relationships. However, buildings can either encourage those relationships or unintentionally make them more difficult.

Throughout the listening sessions, members consistently emphasized that some of the most meaningful ministry moments occur before and after worship services rather than during formal programs. They happen in conversations. They happen when visitors are welcomed. They happen when Bible study discussions continue over coffee. They happen when parents connect after school events. They happen when members encourage one another through challenges, celebrate blessings together, and build friendships that strengthen the congregation.

Several participants specifically noted that Pilgrim's culture is one of its greatest strengths and encouraged the committee to think intentionally about how future facilities can reinforce that culture.

As a result, gathering spaces became one of the most frequently discussed topics throughout the listening process.

Members repeatedly expressed support for creating environments that encourage people to stay rather than immediately leave after worship.

Coffee areas were among the most frequently mentioned ideas. This was not because members were asking for a coffee shop. Rather, people repeatedly described coffee as a catalyst for conversation.

Several participants noted that some of their best interactions with fellow members occur while standing with a cup of coffee and talking for a few minutes after worship. Others observed that coffee areas often become natural gathering points where visitors can be welcomed and introduced to others.

Many members viewed hospitality spaces as ministry spaces rather than amenities.

High-top tables were another surprisingly common suggestion. Particularly among younger adults, there was strong support for standing-height conversation areas. Several participants noted that many post-worship conversations

occur while people are "almost leaving." High-top tables provide a natural place to pause and connect without requiring people to commit to sitting down for extended periods.

Comfortable seating clusters also received considerable support. Members frequently referenced spaces that feel warm, inviting, and conducive to conversation. Rather than large open rooms filled only with tables, participants often described a variety of gathering environments that could support both larger social interactions and smaller conversations.

Fireplaces emerged as another frequently mentioned feature. Again, this was not primarily about aesthetics. Rather, fireplaces were often associated with warmth, comfort, hospitality, and creating environments where people naturally want to spend time together. Several church visits reinforced these observations.

During tours, committee members consistently noticed that some of the most successful gathering spaces were not necessarily the largest or most expensive. Instead, they were spaces intentionally designed to encourage interaction. Members often remained in those spaces long after services concluded. Visitors naturally gathered there. Conversations developed easily. Relationships were strengthened. Those observations aligned remarkably well with what Pilgrim members described during the listening sessions.

The discussions also revealed a broader ministry opportunity. Many participants noted that Pilgrim's current facilities sometimes limit the congregation's ability to host larger fellowship events, receptions, educational gatherings, and ministry activities. While members consistently expressed appreciation for existing spaces, they also identified opportunities to create more flexible gathering environments capable of supporting a broader range of ministry functions.

This conversation naturally connected to discussions about funerals, weddings, Bible studies, school events, youth activities, congregational meetings, and community outreach opportunities.

Members repeatedly emphasized that gathering spaces should not be viewed solely as Sunday morning environments. Rather, they should support ministry throughout the week. At the same time, the listening sessions revealed another important priority. Many members expressed concern that the sanctuary itself should remain distinct from fellowship areas. This theme surfaced repeatedly and often passionately.

Participants consistently supported hospitality, coffee, conversation, and fellowship. However, they also expressed a desire to preserve the sanctuary as a sacred environment set apart for worship.

Several members specifically mentioned that they appreciate opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer before services begin. Others expressed concern about excessive noise from gathering areas carrying into the sanctuary.

One participant summarized the tension particularly well:

"We come together to worship, but we also come together as family."

Members do not want to lose either aspect of Pilgrim's identity. The committee has come to view these priorities not as competing interests but as complementary ministry opportunities. Pilgrim values hospitality. Pilgrim values reverence. Future facilities should support both.

This realization has influenced many planning conversations. Rather than asking whether fellowship or worship should receive greater emphasis, the committee has focused on how thoughtful design can support both simultaneously.

Acoustical separation.

Circulation patterns.

Architectural transitions.

Visual distinctions between gathering spaces and worship spaces.

All of these considerations help create environments that encourage relationships while preserving the sacred character of worship. Another theme that surfaced repeatedly involved welcoming newcomers. Many participants encouraged the committee to think intentionally about the experience of a first-time visitor.

What do they see when they arrive?

How easily can they find the sanctuary?

Where do they gather before worship?

How do they connect with other members?

How comfortable do they feel?

Several participants noted that guests often form impressions within the first few minutes of arriving on a campus. Because of this, entrances, gathering spaces, signage, hospitality areas, and circulation patterns all become important ministry tools. Members repeatedly encouraged the committee to design with guests in mind. Not because Pilgrim wants to be something it is not. But because Pilgrim wants newcomers to experience the same warmth and welcome that so many current members experienced when they first arrived.

The hospitality conversations also intersected with discussions about church and school ministry. Many participants noted that school families often experience Pilgrim through concerts, chapel services, athletic events, preschool activities, and educational programs before they ever attend a worship service. As a result, gathering spaces can play an important role in helping those families connect with the broader congregation.

The committee believes this is an important observation. Hospitality is not simply about making existing members comfortable. It is also about creating opportunities for new relationships and future ministry growth. Ultimately, the discussions surrounding hospitality reinforced a broader truth that surfaced repeatedly throughout the listening process.

Pilgrim is not merely a collection of programs. It is not simply a worship service. It is not only a school. It is a church family. The spaces we create should reflect that reality. They should support worship. They should support fellowship. They should support education. They should support outreach.

And most importantly, they should help people connect with one another and with Christ.

As planning continues, the committee expects hospitality and gathering spaces to remain an important part of the broader vision for the future campus. Members have made it clear that these spaces matter—not because of what they are, but because of what happens within them.

Relationships are built there.

Visitors are welcomed there.

Conversations happen there.

Ministry happens there.

And for that reason, these spaces deserve thoughtful attention as the project moves forward.

## **School and Preschool Vision: Planning for Future Ministry**

One of the most encouraging discoveries throughout the planning process has been the degree to which congregation members view the church and school as interconnected ministries rather than separate organizations sharing a campus.

This theme surfaced repeatedly in the survey, the listening sessions, discussions with school leadership, and presentations to the Steering Committee.

Members consistently described Pilgrim Lutheran School as one of the congregation's most important outreach ministries. Many participants noted that some of the newest members of the congregation first became connected to Pilgrim through the school. Others observed that relationships formed through preschool, athletics, concerts, chapel services, and educational programs often become the bridge that connects families to the broader ministry of the church.

Because of this, many members encouraged the committee to think about educational space not simply as classroom square footage, but as part of Pilgrim's overall mission to share the Gospel with children, families, and the community.

The committee's understanding of these opportunities was strengthened considerably by a recent presentation from Preschool Director Mrs. Amanda Berg.

Mrs. Berg provided an overview of current enrollment trends, future opportunities, licensing considerations, and long-term possibilities for early childhood ministry. Her presentation highlighted both the strengths of Pilgrim's existing programs and the opportunities that may exist in the years ahead.

One of the most significant observations involved demand.

Pilgrim Preschool currently maintains a waiting list for four-year-old kindergarten enrollment. Demand for Christian early childhood education continues to remain strong, and Pilgrim's reputation within the community continues to attract families seeking a Christ-centered educational environment.

Mrs. Berg also discussed Pilgrim's participation in Wisconsin's "Get Kids Ready" initiative and the opportunities it may create moving forward. Combined with existing School Choice programs and continued residential growth within the Menomonee Falls area, these developments suggest that opportunities for educational ministry may continue expanding in the years ahead.

Importantly, Mrs. Berg encouraged the committee not to think only about current enrollment numbers. Instead, she challenged the group to think about where the ministry may be ten, fifteen, or even twenty years from now.

What if preschool enrollment continues to grow?

What if additional early childhood classrooms become necessary?

What if future demand creates opportunities for multiple four-year-old kindergarten sections?

What if before-school or after-school programs expand?

What if additional family ministry opportunities emerge through preschool outreach?

These questions helped shift the conversation from simply solving current space limitations toward thinking more strategically about future ministry possibilities.

The congregation's feedback strongly reinforced this perspective.

Throughout the survey and listening sessions, members repeatedly expressed support for planning beyond immediate needs.

Many participants specifically encouraged the committee to avoid designing solely for today's ministry realities. Instead, they encouraged planning for the ministry opportunities future generations may experience.

One of the most frequently discussed topics involved classroom capacity.

Numerous members expressed support for eventually moving toward one classroom per grade level. While participants consistently praised the excellent work currently taking place within existing facilities, many also recognized that current space limitations create challenges for future growth.

Several classrooms currently occupy spaces that were never originally intended to function as permanent classrooms. Other spaces have been adapted creatively to meet current needs. Members repeatedly acknowledged

and appreciated these efforts while also recognizing that future educational growth will likely require additional flexibility.

The survey generated substantial feedback regarding educational opportunities members would like considered during future planning. Suggestions included:

- Additional classrooms.

- Dedicated STEM and robotics space.

- Music and arts classrooms.

- Tutoring and intervention areas.

- Teacher collaboration spaces.

- Flexible instructional environments.

- Dedicated resource rooms.

- Additional meeting and gathering areas.

- Improved storage.

- Technology integration.

Several participants specifically mentioned robotics, science, and technology programs as areas where dedicated space could support future growth. Others discussed opportunities for music education, art instruction, and expanded student support services.

One particularly interesting observation was that members consistently framed these ideas as ministry opportunities rather than merely educational amenities.

Again and again, participants connected educational facilities to Gospel ministry.

- They viewed educational excellence as part of Pilgrim's mission.

- They viewed preschool growth as part of Pilgrim's mission.

- They viewed classroom expansion as part of Pilgrim's mission.

This distinction became increasingly important as the committee considered how educational planning fits within the broader project.

Another recurring theme involved the physical relationship between the church and the school.

Many participants expressed strong support for maintaining close connections between educational and worship spaces. Several noted that regular interaction with the sanctuary plays an important role in helping students understand worship and develop a sense of connection to the congregation.

Others emphasized the importance of chapel services and special worship opportunities that bring students and congregation members together.

Several young adults reflected on their own experiences growing up at Pilgrim and noted that regular exposure to worship spaces helped shape their understanding of church life. Similar observations surfaced during the student listening session.

These conversations reinforced an important truth:

Children are not merely future members of the congregation.

They are members of the congregation today.

The spaces we create help shape how they experience worship, education, fellowship, and Christian community.

The listening sessions also generated significant discussion regarding outdoor spaces and recreational opportunities.

Many school families emphasized the importance of preserving adequate green space for children. Others discussed playground needs, outdoor learning opportunities, and recreational areas that support both educational and congregational activities.

These discussions became particularly relevant because of the physical limitations of the site.

Future planning must balance many competing priorities:

Parking.

Building footprints.

Playgrounds.

Stormwater requirements.

Traffic circulation.

Outdoor gathering areas.

Educational opportunities.

Future expansion possibilities.

As a result, the committee has increasingly come to view the campus as an interconnected system rather than a collection of separate buildings.

Decisions regarding educational space affect worship space.

Decisions regarding parking affect playgrounds.

Decisions regarding building placement affect future growth opportunities.

Everything is connected.

One of the most encouraging outcomes of Mrs. Berg's presentation was the realization that many of the priorities being discussed by school leadership align closely with the priorities identified throughout the listening sessions.

Members consistently expressed support for:

Planning for future growth.

Providing educational flexibility.

Supporting preschool expansion.

Creating one classroom per grade when feasible.

Maintaining strong connections between church and school ministries.

Preserving opportunities for outreach.

Designing spaces that serve future generations well.

Most importantly, members consistently encouraged the committee to view educational facilities as investments in ministry rather than simply operational necessities.

Many participants described the school as one of Pilgrim's most effective ways of reaching families who may not otherwise have a connection to the church. Others spoke about the role Christian education played in their own spiritual development or the lives of their children and grandchildren.

These observations remind the committee that educational planning is ultimately about people.

It is about children learning God's Word.

It is about families being connected to Christ.

It is about creating opportunities for future generations to grow in faith.

As planning continues, the committee expects conversations regarding educational facilities to remain a central part of the project. The congregation has made it clear that school and church growth should not be viewed as competing priorities.

They are part of the same mission.

And for that reason, the future of educational ministry will continue to be an important consideration as the broader vision for the campus begins to take shape.

## **Property Acquisition and Campus Planning: Why Land Matters**

As the Steering Committee has explored future possibilities for worship, education, fellowship, parking, and outreach, one reality has become increasingly clear:

Land matters.

Unlike many aspects of a building project that can be adjusted later, the amount of land available to a ministry creates the framework within which every future decision must occur.

Parking, traffic flow, building placement, playgrounds, green space, stormwater management, educational facilities, gathering areas, and future expansion opportunities all compete for the same limited resource: space.

For that reason, the committee has spent considerable time studying the opportunities and limitations of Pilgrim's current campus.

Many members may remember that previous planning efforts identified site constraints as one of the most significant challenges facing future development. While Pilgrim has been blessed with a highly visible location and strong ministry growth, the campus is also physically constrained. As ministries continue growing, available space becomes increasingly valuable.

Throughout discussions with planners, builders, architects, village officials, and consultants, one theme surfaced repeatedly.

Flexibility is valuable.

Additional flexibility allows a congregation to solve problems more effectively.

It allows parking to function more efficiently.

It allows safer traffic flow.

It creates more options for future educational expansion.

It creates opportunities to preserve green space.

It improves site circulation.

And perhaps most importantly, it allows future decisions to be made thoughtfully rather than reactively.

For these reasons, the committee has spent considerable time evaluating opportunities involving adjacent property.

Many members are already aware that a neighboring property by the campus has become available for consideration. While no final decisions have been made, the committee believes it is important for the congregation to understand why this opportunity has received serious attention.

At first glance, discussions about property acquisition can sound like real estate transactions.

In reality, the committee views them as ministry discussions.

The question is not simply whether a house should be purchased.

The question is whether additional land creates opportunities that could benefit future ministry.

Throughout conversations with Moore Construction and other planning professionals, one observation surfaced repeatedly.

Properties adjacent to church campuses rarely become available.

When they do become available, congregations often have only a limited window in which to evaluate the opportunity. If the property is sold to another owner, the opportunity may not return for decades.

Because of this, the committee felt it was important to at least explore the implications.

Additional property could influence a wide variety of future planning considerations.

Parking is one obvious example.

Many members have expressed concerns regarding parking availability, parking proximity, and traffic flow. Additional property could potentially provide flexibility in addressing those concerns.

However, parking is only part of the conversation.

Additional land could also influence:

- Building placement.

- Stormwater management.

- Emergency vehicle access.

- Playground locations.

- Outdoor gathering areas.

- Educational facilities.

- Future expansion opportunities.

- Preservation of green space.

- Traffic circulation throughout the campus.

In many ways, the true value lies not in any single solution but in the increased number of options available to future planners.

Several members of the committee have used the phrase "buying flexibility" when discussing the opportunity.

That description seems particularly appropriate.

Future planning is difficult when options are limited.

Additional land creates options.

The committee also recognizes that many members have questions regarding timing.

Why discuss property before architectural plans are complete?

The answer is largely practical.

Many aspects of future site planning depend on understanding the available land. In addition, village officials and planners often cannot provide definitive answers regarding setbacks, parking, circulation, and zoning questions until property ownership and site boundaries are established.

Simply put, understanding what is possible often requires understanding what land is available.

It is also important to emphasize that property acquisition and construction are not the same decision.

Even if additional property were eventually acquired, years of planning, design, fundraising, and congregational discussion would still remain ahead.

The committee views property discussions as part of long-term campus planning rather than immediate construction activity.

Another interesting observation emerged during the listening sessions.

Many participants encouraged the committee to think beyond current needs.

Several members specifically stated that future generations may face opportunities and challenges we cannot yet anticipate. For that reason, they encouraged preserving as much flexibility as possible whenever reasonable opportunities arise.

This feedback aligns closely with one of the recurring themes throughout the project.

"Do it right the first time."

Members consistently encouraged the committee to avoid decisions that could unintentionally limit future ministry opportunities.

Whether discussing acoustics, classrooms, parking, technology, or property, the congregation repeatedly emphasized the importance of long-term thinking.

As planning continues, property considerations will remain an important part of the conversation because they influence nearly every aspect of what may ultimately be possible on the campus.

The committee remains committed to transparency as these discussions continue and recognizes that any significant decisions regarding property or future construction will ultimately involve congregational communication and participation.

For now, the primary goal is understanding opportunities, preserving options, and ensuring that future decisions are made from a position of knowledge rather than urgency.

## **Selecting the Right Architect**

One lesson that has surfaced repeatedly throughout this process is that church buildings are different.

That statement may seem obvious, but many members of the committee have come to appreciate just how different they truly are.

Designing a successful church involves far more than creating an attractive building. A church must support worship, education, hospitality, accessibility, fellowship, music ministry, outreach, technology, parking, circulation, and long-term flexibility. In many ways, it is one of the most complex building types a design team can undertake.

Over the past several months, the committee has visited churches, spoken with pastors and church leaders, reviewed previous planning efforts, and studied examples from both successful and less successful projects. One theme emerged repeatedly during those conversations.

The quality of the architect matters.

Many churches spoke positively about architects who listened carefully, understood worship, and helped translate ministry goals into physical spaces. Others shared stories of projects where architects were technically competent but lacked a deep understanding of how churches function. In those situations, congregations often found themselves making costly adjustments later because important ministry needs had not been considered early enough.

Those conversations reinforced the committee's belief that selecting an architect may be one of the most important decisions made during the entire project.

For that reason, the committee has intentionally approached architect selection slowly and thoughtfully.

Rather than simply requesting drawings, the committee first sought to understand what the congregation values. We wanted to know what should be preserved, what opportunities should be pursued, and what concerns needed to be addressed before asking an architect to begin drawing solutions.

The feedback collected through surveys and listening sessions is now becoming one of the most important tools in the architect selection process.

Architects are not simply being asked to design a building.

They are being asked to help create spaces that support the priorities identified by the congregation.

Those priorities include:

- Strong acoustics and congregational singing.

- Clear visibility of Word and Sacrament.

- Sacred and timeless architecture.

- Meaningful fellowship and hospitality spaces.

- School and preschool growth opportunities.

- Accessibility and inclusion.

- Stewardship and long-term durability.

- Flexibility for future ministry needs.

- A campus that remains distinctly Pilgrim.

In early June, a smaller interview team representing the Steering Committee began meeting with architectural firms experienced in church and educational design. These conversations focus not only on design experience, but also on philosophy, process, collaboration, and understanding of ministry.

The committee is asking questions such as:

- How do you design for worship?

- How do you incorporate acoustics into the earliest stages of design?

- How do you balance flexibility and sacredness?

How do you engage congregations during the design process?

How do you help churches make decisions when priorities compete?

How do you plan for growth without sacrificing intimacy?

No architect has been selected as of the writing of this report. Once interviews are complete and recommendations are made, the committee will communicate the next steps to the congregation.

As the project continues moving toward conceptual design, the Steering Committee has also explored how additional expertise may help bridge the gap between ministry goals and architectural design. One individual who may serve as a resource in future phases is Paul Mattek. Paul has a background that includes architectural design, sacred space planning, and church ministry. Earlier this year, he met with the committee to discuss church architecture and the importance of allowing a congregation's theology, worship practices, and ministry priorities to shape the design process. While Paul has not been actively involved in the project to date and no specific role has been finalized, the committee believes his perspective may be a valuable resource as architects begin translating congregational priorities into future design concepts.

### **What We Are Learning About Church Design**

One interesting observation from both the listening sessions and our conversations with consultants is that many of the congregation's priorities align closely with broader principles of church architecture.

Members consistently asked for spaces that are timeless rather than trendy. They want buildings that will still feel appropriate and beautiful decades from now. They want spaces that clearly communicate their purpose as places of worship while remaining welcoming to visitors and newcomers.

Many members expressed a desire for beauty without extravagance.

This distinction surfaced repeatedly.

Participants did not ask for luxury. They did not ask for excess. Rather, they spoke about beauty that reflects the importance of what takes place within the sanctuary. They spoke about quality materials, thoughtful craftsmanship, meaningful symbolism, and spaces that communicate reverence.

Members also consistently asked for spaces that feel sacred without becoming intimidating.

Several participants specifically noted that they appreciate churches that clearly feel like churches while still remaining approachable and welcoming to guests. They encouraged the committee to think carefully about how architecture can communicate both reverence and hospitality.

Another common theme involved flexibility.

Many members expressed support for flexible spaces that can accommodate future ministry needs. At the same time, they also expressed concern that the sanctuary should not become a generic multipurpose room.

This creates an interesting design challenge.

How do you create flexibility without sacrificing identity?

How do you accommodate different musical groups without creating a performance venue?

How do you support fellowship while preserving reverence?

How do you design for growth while maintaining intimacy?

The committee has come to realize that these are not contradictions. They are design challenges. And they are exactly the kinds of challenges experienced church architects are trained to solve.

In many ways, that is why so much time has been invested in listening before designing.

The clearer we become about who we are, the easier it becomes to determine what we should build.

## Looking Ahead

As the project enters its next phase, members can expect to begin hearing more about conceptual planning, site studies, architect recommendations, and potential design directions.

This does not mean final decisions are imminent.

In many ways, the project is still in its learning stage.

However, the foundation established over the past year is beginning to create a roadmap for the future.

The committee now has:

- Survey data from the congregation.

- Insights from listening sessions.

- Feedback from young adults and students.

- School and preschool planning input.

- Music ministry recommendations.

- Acoustical guidance.

- Property planning analysis.

- Church tour observations.

- Guiding principles.

- Architect interviews.

Together, these pieces are helping shape a vision that is becoming increasingly clear.

The next phase will involve translating that vision into physical possibilities.

That process will require patience, prayer, discussion, and continued congregational involvement.

The committee remains committed to transparency and communication throughout the journey.

Most importantly, we remain committed to keeping ministry at the center of every conversation.

Buildings matter because ministry matters.

The goal is not simply to construct a facility.

The goal is to create spaces that support the proclamation of the Gospel, strengthen Christian community, educate future generations, and serve as tools for ministry for decades to come.

As we reflect on the work completed so far, perhaps the most encouraging observation is the degree of unity that has emerged throughout the process.

The congregation has spoken with remarkable consistency.

Members have emphasized worship, education, hospitality, music, accessibility, stewardship, and future generations.

They have encouraged thoughtful planning rather than rushed decisions.

They have challenged the committee to think beyond today's needs and consider what opportunities God may place before Pilgrim in the future.

And perhaps most importantly, they have repeatedly reminded us that this project is ultimately not about buildings.

It is about ministry.

It is about creating places where children will be baptized, where students will learn God's Word, where families will worship together, where friendships will be formed, where visitors will be welcomed, where future generations will encounter Christ, and where the Gospel will continue to be proclaimed long after all of us are gone.

The committee remains deeply grateful for the congregation's prayers, encouragement, participation, questions, and feedback throughout this process.

Your voices have shaped this work.

Your ideas have influenced our discussions.

Your concerns have strengthened our planning.

And your commitment to Pilgrim's future continues to guide us as we move forward.

We look forward to sharing more in the months ahead as architectural concepts begin to emerge and the next chapter of this journey unfolds.

Until then, we ask for your continued prayers, wisdom, patience, and support.

As one survey participant wisely wrote:

*"Keep the mission and ministry central. The building is a tool. The Gospel is the purpose."*

That sentiment captures the heart of everything we hope to accomplish.

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain."* — Psalm 127:1

In Christ,

Joel Schwartz

Steering Committee Chair