

February 26, 2025

Dear Canton First Family and Friends,

As we continue to lean into our mission of Sharing Life, Sharing Christ, For Others, we are excited to update you on the progress of the building expansion project.

Over the past two and a half years, Canton First Methodist has met numerous challenges with grace and unity. Guided by God, we have made important decisions about our affiliation, revitalized facilities and signage, upgraded the playground, and expanded local missions. Throughout this time, our faith, our numbers, and our love for the community have grown.

Now, we stand at another defining moment. God has answered our prayers for more next generation families and young people! Two years ago, we sensed God saying He is bringing one hundred new young families within five years, and we are witnessing God fulfill His promise as we strive to live into and be faithful to His vision for Canton First Methodist. We rejoice in the growing presence of children and youth in worship services, Sunday school, preschool, and youth activities. Their enthusiasm and laughter fill the halls as they fellowship, grow in faith, serve, and worship.

While our beautiful sanctuary continues to meet our worship needs, we are quickly outgrowing space for Sunday school, discipleship and other ministries. During the week, nearly every classroom is in use for church and community events. As a congregation with a proud 183-year heritage, we are committed to passing on the faith we have received, and now is the time to embrace that responsibility.

Recognizing these growing needs, the Governing Board authorized a Building Expansion Task Force in August 2024. This team, comprised of Bob Hulsey, Susan Dreschel, Will Thacker, Mike McCord, Joseph DeSimone, James Cannon, Dave Sullivan, Julie Little, and Pastor Kenny Ott, has been working diligently to explore solutions.

After careful consideration and consultation with an architect, Mr. Gene Barrington (who designed and oversaw the construction of our sanctuary), the Task Force recommends a new two-story, 10,000 square-foot addition connected to the back of the Fellowship Hall. This plan preserves the existing drive and may allow us to expand parking by shifting the current drive and parking area onto existing church-owned land, potentially adding new parking spaces. This expansion, along with renovations to current classroom and office

spaces, will provide the necessary room for growth for generations to come as we believe *God is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3.20).*

The preliminary designs and drawings for this exciting project are now complete and will be shared with the church in the coming weeks. Once the design is approved, Mr. Barrington will put the project out for bids to finalize construction costs. The preliminary plan anticipates construction to begin in September 2025, with completion targeted for 2027.

This is a significant undertaking, and we recognize the necessity of seeking God's guidance every step of the way. We humbly ask for your prayers as we move forward in this process. Please pray for discernment and wisdom for our leadership, the Building Task Force, the Finance Team, and the Capital Stewardship Experience Team. And, most importantly, please pray for our church, that we may continue to be a beacon of God's love and grace in our community.

Over the coming weeks, we will be holding dedicated prayer and discernment sessions to allow our church family to come together, pray for this project, and share their thoughts. We encourage you to participate in these sessions as we collectively seek God's will for our Church and its future. *Specific dates, times, and formats for these sessions will be shared soon.*

Of course, this expansion will require significant financial commitment. While we are still finalizing the details, we anticipate the total cost to be in the range of \$4.5 M to \$5 M. Our Finance Team has been exploring various funding options and analyzing the potential budget impacts of the expansion. We have engaged a capital campaign consultant to develop a comprehensive plan that will support God's vision for our church and make this expansion a reality. Our church has a remarkable history of rising to meet the financial needs of God's work, and we are confident that this time will be no different. Our next communication will detail the financial prospectus and outline our capital campaign.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

May God bless and keep you,

Mike Haire, Governing Board Chair

Susan Dreschel, Lay Leader

cc: Dr. Kenny Ott, Lead Pastor