



GOOD SHEPHERD EPISCOPAL CHURCH

June 20, 2023

A letter to the congregation and friends of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Venice, Florida

Dear friends in Christ,

May the peace of the Lord be with you. Greetings! We are sending you this letter to bring you good news some eight months after the category 4 winds and rains of Hurricane Ian descended upon our church. Wind and rain are both vital to the flourishing of our planet. They add beauty and cause life to grow. But that which brings beauty and life can also bring destruction. Hurricane Ian brought so much rain in such a short period of time that the Chestnut Creek pond out back overflowed its banks and flooded our building. And the hurricane winds literally lifted our metal roof up and drove the rain in to saturate our ceilings.

Over the past eight months a group of parishioners with a wide range of talents and experience has been busy addressing the present damage. We've also considered what we might do to avoid future damage and revisioned how we might improve our facility. We organized into two teams. The Project Management Team has been responsible for researching materials and contractors, negotiating contracts with the help of a lawyer from Sarasota and managing the construction projects as they start up. We found we had wind damage affecting the roof and ceilings. We had flood damage to our entire facility from the ground up four feet, including carpets and sheetrock. The organ and raised sanctuary platform and most of the furnishings were water-soaked. From the beginning we asked ourselves this question: "Do we want to restore everything to the way it was before? Or do we want to improve our facility, to make it better?" This question led us to ask other, more specific questions.

We took a hard look at what steps we could take to reduce the risk of damage from an inevitable future storm. Instead of repairing our aging roof, should we install a new roof, up to current code, that will be better able to withstand the high winds? Should we replace the carpets with vinyl flooring that will withstand being flooded? Should we install impact hurricane windows where needed? Can we apply a sealant around our foundation? And can we acquire door shields that will resist flooding from the next storm? All of these ideas have been researched and included in our plans for the future strengthening of our building.

While Ian was a calamity, it also presents us with an opportunity. The second team, the Parish Revisioning Team, has endeavored to come up with many wonderful, creative ideas for how we might add to and improve the building and grounds. The sky was the limit during our initial revisioning. Many of the ideas have had to be put aside for a future day as we weighed "need-to-have" ideas against "nice-to-have" ideas.

With contractors already on site, *now* is the right time to make some upgrades to our facilities. We can refresh our tired bathrooms. We can remove a wall to make the choir room into a bigger, more useful room. The meeting room at the back of the Nave can be used as a vesting room. We can replace all our fluorescent lighting with energy-saving LED bulbs. We can build a livestreaming control center at the back of the Nave. We can add stained glass windows to enhance the beauty of our worship space. And we can add better signage throughout the building...with new closets and shelving in four rooms.

A lot of planning and preparation has been accomplished. So, the good news is that we're now finally ready to start construction! We have signed the three most significant contracts, two for a new roof and one for all the reconstruction of the interior of the building. Yes, indeed, this is good news, *however*, we still have challenges ahead. Following Jan, contractors became very busy, so we've had to wait patiently for our turn. In addition, supply chains for materials are strained by all the restoration being done up and down the Gulf.

And we find ourselves in an inflationary period that is causing all our costs to increase. We estimate that this project, from the initial water mitigation eight months ago, up to the time of completion, will cost us close to one and one half million dollars. To date, we have received almost six hundred and sixty thousand dollars from our insurance company. This is not all the proceeds we can expect from our claim. We have also been blessed to have received over two hundred twelve thousand dollars in generous donations from parishioners, friends and our Diocese.

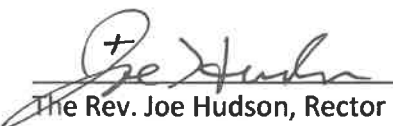
We are certain that the planned improvements will better protect the building from future risk and will enhance our worship experience. In addition to additional insurance proceeds, we are hopeful that we will, with the help of our Diocese, receive funding from the claim we'll file with the federal government. But even with these two sources, we know we will need additional funding. So we will have an opportunity, after the first of the year, to join together and participate in a campaign to fund the anticipated (yet to be determined) shortfall.

So, what's the good news today? We will upgrade our roof to meet current standards, in order to protect our building for the foreseeable future. We will replace the carpet with vinyl flooring that will resist damage from flooding. And we're adding impact hurricane windows and making other interior and exterior improvements. When will you see some action? We're patiently waiting for the ordered materials to arrive. We are gearing up to start construction. First, we'll replace the roof. Then, we'll do the interior work everywhere but the Nave. Finally, we'll tackle the Nave. There will be plenty of disruption during construction, but we will figure out how to faithfully maintain our worship schedule throughout this time. It will be an adventure, that's for sure!

In the coming weeks, we will schedule a number of informal meetings at church where leaders in this restoration project will be available to answer any questions you might have. Watch your Wednesday eBlast for dates and times.

We truly appreciate your faith, patience and understanding as we have carefully researched and planned out this important project. We are also very grateful for everyone who has given to our restoration and revisioning fund. Your continued support is critical to our success. Thank you!

Through every adversity, we are blessed by the redeeming love of Jesus Christ!


The Rev. Joe Hudson, Rector


Christine Neal, Senior Warden