

**SOME QUESTIONS (Q) AND RESPONSES (R) PERTAINING  
TO NEW FACILITIES INVESTIGATION (NFI)**

**Port Nelson United Church**

**June, 2011**

Q: What is NFI?

R: This stands for “New Facilities Investigation.” It refers to a committee that was set up by the Church Council (the governing body of Port Nelson) to respond to the following motion that was approved by over 70 percent of those present at the Annual Congregation in February, 2011:

*“that Council prepare a report and make a recommendation for the rebuilding of a new and improved facility (East of the existing sanctuary), together with a sound plan for financing the improvements, all of which will be approved by the Congregation prior to commencement of the project”.*

Q: Who is on the NFI Committee?

R: The NFI Committee is chaired by June Wright, who is the liason person with the Church Council. The NFI Committee consists of two arms: A building arm chaired by John Zinkie, and a finance arm chaired by Bill Mercer.

Q: What is the NFI Committee doing?

R: The NFI Committee is working to respond to the above motion by investigating the feasibility of building a new structure, east of the existing church sanctuary. The building arm is investigating the physical needs of such a structure, and the finance arm is investigating the financial feasibility of such a project.

Q: Why are we building a new facility?

R: We are not. We are, at this time, investigating what the option of rebuilding part of our church facility might entail.

Q: Why are we investigating the option of rebuilding part of our church facility?

R: Because, at the congregation’s Annual Meeting in February, 2011, a strong majority of the church family voted to do so. The reasons for this are many, but in a nutshell, most people believe the time is right to investigate this as an option for the future.

Q: How did we get to this point?

R: The Property Management Ministry, a standing committee of the Church Council, has been striving to maintain an aging structure that has not been particularly well maintained over the years. There has not been an ongoing maintenance plan. The original structure at the east end of the facility was built in the 1950s and there are many concerns with it. In addition, the church family, in 2010, clarified its mission and values, and it is clear that our existing facilities make it difficult for us to live out our mission and values.

Q: How do we know there are concerns with the original structure?

R: To find out the specific concerns, the Property Management Ministry commissioned a “Building Condition Assessment and Reserve Fund Study” in 2010 to perform a comprehensive review of the entire structure. The report indicated that, in order to catch up with repairs and upkeep, we would need to spend about \$1.7 million over the next ten years.

Q: The \$.1.7 million figure seems high to repair our structure. Is this accurate?

R: We are aware that some of the cost estimates in the Building Condition Study may be higher than actual costs, but nevertheless, there is much which needs repairing at significant cost.

Q: What are the specific concerns with the original structure?

R: There are many. Here are a number:

- Lack of Energy efficiency. This subject is often described by referring to “R” factors of walls, windows, doors and roofs. When any of those basic building items has a poor or low “R” rating the entire rating for that space is reduced. Consider the following:
  - the upper auditorium roof is constructed of 3” thick wooden planks, ¾” rigid fiberboard then shingles
  - the outside walls are only insulated above and below the windows with 3 5/8” rock wool
  - the lower auditorium (basement) is not insulated
  - the chapel and kitchen roofs are flat steel deck with 1.5” rigid insulation
  - the chapel windows are steel framed with leaded single glazed glass (no thermal breaks)
  - the upper auditorium windows are single glass panes (no thermal breaks)
  - the upper central area roofs are steel deck with 1.5” rigid insulation
  - the lower entrance way has 8” bats of fibreglass in the ceiling and 1.5” rigid insulation in exterior walls, except around the windows which have 3” fibreglass bats.
  - many more deficiencies

None of the building elements east of the sanctuary can boast an average “R” rating above ten.

New homes normally have R20 in the walls (windows & doors) and R40 in the ceilings.

Into the old and energy-inefficient east wing spaces we inject heat in the winter and try to provide space and event specific summer cooling. The two boiler rooms (2 boiler units each) run non-stop from fall through to spring. They maintain a reservoir of hot water whether it is needed or not and there is no heat recovery system on the boiler exhausts (chimneys).

In the lower entranceway, electric forced air is injected from ceiling grills into an area with doors that have no thermal separation in their windows or weather stripping.

The summer heat gain in the upper auditorium and central area renders those spaces very uncomfortable to nearly unusable.

- Lack of Accessibility
- Increasing concern with aesthetic beauty. Our Roseland neighbourhood is changing. New, high-end homes are being built. We were founded as a neighbourhood church, and still largely draw from the neighbourhood. In fact, a very recent demographic study has told us that the majority of our church family live in three areas of Burlington: very close to the church (i.e. east of Guelph Line, west of Appleby Line and south of New Street), in

Millcroft, and in Tyandaga. If we are to continue to grow, people will expect facilities and landscaping that are in keeping with the neighbourhood in which we are situated.

Q: What are our mission and values?

R: Our mission statement is: *To reach out to one another and our world as we grow spiritually in a caring, inclusive, Christian community enriched by meaningful worship.* Our values are: A sense of community, being inclusive, caring, growing spiritually, meaningful worship and reaching out.

Q: How does our existing building inhibit living these out?

R: Our building is not accessible. There is no washroom that people with disabilities can use. There are many stairs without any reliable way to navigate them. The layout of our building is not helpful to first-time worshippers and visitors. The gathering spaces are too small to accommodate even a typical worshipping community, let alone special functions such as weddings, funerals and concerts.

In addition, a new phase of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* will require us to report how we will address 11 requirements in the standards throughout our church facilities by January, 2012. The Act has four core principles:

- Independence
- Dignity
- Integration
- Equality of Opportunity

Q: Can't the existing structure simply be repaired and modified?

R: This is an option. However, it has become clear that the cost of doing this may well be equal to or even exceed the cost of a new structure. We would still be left with an aging structure that is not fully accessible or flexible, is very energy inefficient, limits our ability to live out our values, and is, increasingly, not aesthetically pleasing.

Q: I have heard that we are carrying a deficit. How can we afford to do anything right now?

R: There are many ways people give. Regular givings mostly support the day-to-day operations of the church, but many people enjoy supporting capital projects by making a gift from their own capital. There are many grants available for new facility projects, particularly if they address energy efficiency. Due to decisions made by the church family, and due to the economic recession in 2009, there has been an operating deficit for the last few years. The congregation approved a balanced budget for the year 2011 at the February Annual Meeting, and this is a conservative estimate. We have an active Stewardship Ministry that is working hard to open the various doors of giving that are available as opportunities for people. This is beginning to reap benefits. Regular givings are up significantly this year. As well, some costs have been reduced.

Q: How can we leave a legacy of financial burden for the next generation?

R: We shouldn't, and we don't plan to. It is also worth remembering that leaving an aging building in need of costly repairs would be leaving a burden for the next generation.

Q: Our congregation isn't growing. Why do we need a new building?

R: We believe Port Nelson has something unique to offer the Burlington community. Our values are ones that many other churches cannot claim. We remain one of the strongest United Churches in the area. In fact, among all the United Churches in Halton Presbytery (Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga and Milton), we generate the second-highest amount of money each year in givings, and we are in the top five in attendance at worship. There are also many days when our parking lot is full because of the various activities and events in our building. But church growth is more about spiritual growth on the journey than about numbers in the pews and dollars on the plate. Our mission defines us well. We are on an exciting journey with God and with Jesus the Christ, rooted in the power of the Spirit.

Q: What are the next steps?

R: Just as professional help was engaged to examine the option of repairing the existing structure, so too has professional help been engaged to consider the option of building a new facility east of the sanctuary. An architectural firm has been retained to work with the NFI committee in the next six months. The professionals will lead us through a careful distillation of all data collected so far from the church family (Town Hall gatherings, reports, etc.). They will develop a survey to be distributed to the church family. They will report back to the congregation in the fall. We will hold more Town Hall gatherings to discuss the findings.

Q: When will we make a decision about what to do?

R: When we have enough information to do so, and when we feel the time is right. No decisions have been made at this point, other than to investigate options. The church family will decide on whether to proceed with building a new facility, or whether to repair the existing facility. We need to remember, however, that doing nothing is not a viable long-term option.

Q: I still have further questions and concerns? What should I do?

R: Talk to one of the people involved in the leadership of the NFI Committee (June Wright, Bill Mercer or John Zinkie). Respond to any surveys, and attend any events planned for the congregation in the fall.

Q: How can I help?

R: Listen well. Keep an open mind and heart. Consider the future and what God is calling us to do and who God is calling us to be. Consider how God might be calling you to be involved (i.e. giving a gift of time, money or talent). Pray for our church. Pray for our Church Council. Pray for the NFI Committee.