

## Schoharie Reformed Church “Building the Kingdom” Capital Campaign Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q: How much money has the church spent on repairs since Hurricane Irene’s impact on August 28, 2011?**

A: To date (May 2016), over \$750k in addition to regular expenses. The church has expended roughly 8 budget years in just over four years since the flood. We estimate spending \$1.25 million on the buildings and grounds before we are done.

**Q: How much money did the church receive from insurance, FEMA, or other large or public sector granting sources?**

A: NONE! The church, along with the majority of the village, is NOT in the 100 year flood plain and did not have flood insurance. Regular insurance will not pay anything for floods. The church, along with many other churches, was denied public assistance through FEMA, even for church owned community space. Appeals and letters to congressional leaders have not resulted in any assistance. All funds have come from generous private sources including congregation members, sister churches, and the church’s own reserves.

**Q: Why didn’t the church just tear down the sanctuary building and start over?**

A: At first, the extent of the damage and disrepair was hidden. The first two years of attempted repairs were a long process of additional discovery revealing the extent of the structural issues. Also, based on the historic character of the building and the stained glass windows, the congregation would not have considered this an option – especially in the midst of the widespread community trauma.

**Q: What is included in the \$750k for the Capital Campaign?**

A: We believe raising money should primarily reflect our mission and vision for ministry. Who cares about a building if it is not being used to glorify God, or we are not engaging God’s love at work in our community? \$500k is designated for the remaining sanctuary building project which will include some new ministry opportunities, \$100k for other deferred maintenance, and \$150k is designated for mission and ministry. This includes rebuilding our church playground for community use (only playground in the village accessible during the school day, and only playground in the central and south side of the village), assisting in rebuilding with sister churches, and sending some mission trips.

**Q: What was the extent of the damage caused by Irene and Lee?**

A: 90% of the entire village of Schoharie sustained substantial damages. Over 2000 households along the Schoharie Creek basin were severely impacted. One third of congregation families were personally impacted; another 1/3 had family members impacted. Early projections of residential damage alone was over \$110 million. Foundations gave way, barns were moved, and most first floors had to be gutted. All church owned building were impacted. The fellowship hall was submerged and a complete loss. The Heritage House had about 2 feet of muddy water on its first floor and a foundation breach. The Annex was submerged just below

the roof line. The Sanctuary had about 18 inches of muddy water in it: just enough to save the hymnals but throw out the pew cushions.

As the clean-up began, mold grew within 24 hours, beginning what seemed like an unending cycle of gutting “a little bit more.” With each uncovering, additional structural observations were made and concerns were heightened. We knew we had an old building with some structural issues. The flood exacerbated those issues, and uncovered the extent of them.

**Q: “You are STILL working on your building? What on earth has taken sooo long?!!”**

A: Seeking to be good stewards of our space and initially thinking the damage was not as extensive as it was, the building has been somewhat of a mystery novel unfolding as our hard-working volunteers diligently sought to “get to the bottom” of the structural issues and then figure out how to address them. Namely, a main structural beam in the attic was cut when the organ was put in (around 1900); the belfry has been sinking down slightly and leaking; the massive front stone steps were pushing against the foundation; and the East/pulpit area main brick wall was bowed in and crumbling at the attic gable. A structural team, including architectural and engineering expertise, needed time to “solve” the mysteries and create a plan.

**Q: “Why do you need so much money? Can’t you just use volunteers?”**

A: Countless volunteers and volunteer hours have gone into building repairs. Additionally, the majority of contractors have been local experts who have donated a portion of their services, sometimes large portions! Other county buildings have spent multi-millions in basic repairs. Our repairs have been extensive and have required professional assistance; the money spent does not reflect the hundreds and hundreds of hours of volunteer labor and donated services. Volunteer assistance will continue to be utilized where possible.

**Q: What have been your guiding principles as you have rebuilt?**

A: Thank you for asking! It has been important for us to keep perspective that the church is not the building, yet the building is a part of us, and this long ordeal is an opportunity for us to learn and grow. All congregational ministry has continued. Flood recovery ministry grew out of the congregation. We have been guided by prioritizing God and people over projects, seeking long term “best” solutions that address as many goals as possible, supporting the local economy, and affirming and prioritizing our vision for ministry as we create the physical plans. “It’s not what happens, it is how we treat each other in the process” and “do it right” have been two central phrases. We have noted various meanings that have been applied to both phrases and much discussion continues as we work out life together.

**Q: What have you learned through it all?**

A: Again, thank you for asking! We’ve learned an incredible amount that we would like to share with you! Just a few of our learnings include: new depths and meanings of patience; how to be community in the midst of deep pain; to be present to each other and listen to our stories even when they conflict or contradict; to hold together diverse and fragmented opinions as well as emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual states.

**Q: Have you been able to make any improvements on the buildings as you have repaired them?**

A: Yes! Aside from fixing the main structural issues, our campaign includes adding a handicap lift that will provide access to both the sanctuary and fellowship hall from ground level. We have also added an additional stairwell to make balcony usage safer and add additional light into the sanctuary. We are expanding our pulpit area, creating “open flexible space” for the expansion of the children’s and music programs as well. We had to rebuild. We did not choose to undertake major construction. However, we’ve tried to think long term, strategically, and in line with our vision for ministry in choosing some additional projects while the major projects caused the building to be largely gutted.

**Q: What is the significance of “Building the Kingdom?”**

A: Providentially, “Building the Kingdom” was the theme of our summer Day Camp program in 2011 as well as a pre-scheduled sermon series for the fall of 2011. Volunteers will remember the “Building the Kingdom” sign, which was affixed to our Annex building in the aftermath of the flood with a paper “re” pasted in front of it, greeting the tens of thousands who passed through as the church grounds became the hub of recovery activity for the area. As God’s people, we are all constantly being built and re-built in the image of God. God is at work in, through, around, and even despite us, bringing God’s reign into fullness. God gives us a great and mysterious opportunity to participate in what God is already doing in the world.

**Q: Briefly and in easy to understand terms, what has happened?**

A: We celebrate the incredible work that has happened:

- Pouring new footings in the basement, custom iron beams, and the lifting of the front wall while keeping the organ level and addressing a main beam that was cut in 1894 for the organ.
- Winching roof trusses in the attic back into place.
- Redoing the rotten belfry! Taking off 11 layers of roof, each with moisture in between!
  - Refurbishing the bell; it now glistens!
  - Securing the belfry structure; replacing lots of very rotted wood and refurbishing all of the pillars
  - Placing an additional moisture barrier around the organ; securing our investment in it.
- Stabilizing and re-securing the floors, replacing much rotted wood throughout, addressing a 10x10 main beam with an 8’ split, addressing the hidden recessed flooring; we now have one solid floor.
- Solving the architectural issues of moisture in the basement and the massive weight of the front steps pushing against the building; sealing the foundation, and redoing the front steps with a more uniform rise.
- Adding the additional stairwell while opening up the side window, improving balcony access and lighting in the sanctuary at the same time.

- Stabilized the original spiral stairway. Enlarging the restroom under the stairs in the process.
- Securing the balconies, stabilizing them, figuring out how they are supported in the process.
- Major mold remediation
- New heating that is more efficient with workable noise levels and yet out of the flood plain.
- New modern electric service.
- Replacing the patched, damaged plaster cornice over the organ.
- And now all of the recent work:
  - Pulpit area removal and mold remediation
  - Back wall stabilization: gable brick removed, attic strengthened, and steel beams
  - Next stages in electrical work, including first floor outlets under all windows and lighting
  - Floor boards are scrubbed, floors are back to level, and wood is put down in all but the front.
- Removal of the peak of the East/Main pulpit wall. There was a significant leaning of the brick wall. The peak was folded in a good 6 inches and bricks were beginning to crumble!
- Architecturally securing the East wall from further leaning (huge custom cast beams have been secured to it and extensive work has taken place both outside and inside, including gutting the entire pulpit area).
- Digging out the back entrance and adding a handicap lift
- Cutting back the balconies and extending the front pulpit area platform with a vision of more “open, flexible space” for music & kids programs in particular. Adding railing in the balcony for code compliance.

Happening now, with your help:

- Finishing carpentry in the sanctuary
- Installing new AV equipment in the sanctuary, including a new sound system.

Happening summer – fall 2016, with your help:

- Finishing the basement, including the old “fellowship hall”/Community Room, kitchen, and bathrooms. This will be a complete rebuild including framing, electrical lines, and finishing carpentry.