

REPORT ON IDEAS AND OPTIONS
REGARDING
REBUILDING THE CHURCH
Prepared by the Options Committee
April 30, 2010

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A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There is overwhelming support for rebuilding on the existing site. A new building can be built on the footprint of the old church (plus an extra 5 feet at the back of the building - the depth of the old back entrance). Building on any other footprint would require a variance.

The congregation feels the new building should resemble the old on the exterior (by a majority) and the interior (by an even larger majority). The congregation felt that worshiping in the old church was best described as having qualities subsumed in three main categories: love and community; a sense of peace; and a spiritual quality (either in a traditional “religious” sense or in a broader sense of effect on the spirit).

People commenting on the exterior and interior of the old church mentioned words like simplicity, light, timelessness, and space. Many valued the character and traditions of the church congregation and of the wider community around the church. Certain aspects of the old building, exterior and interior, were particularly valued, but improvements such as bathrooms and better insulation were also requested. The predominant sense was that because of the availability of the Parish House, it was not necessary or desirable to adapt the new church to permit activities other than those for which the old church was satisfactory. All comments and suggestions regarding these matters will be passed to whatever design/building committee may be formed.

Overwhelmingly, the congregation (especially the children) favors “green” building and using local resources, though there may be limitations because of cost or practicality.

Finally, a large proportion of the congregation is uncomfortable with the idea of spending more than the available resources on the rebuilding, but nonetheless an even larger proportion would be willing to contribute or help raise additional funds should this prove unavoidable.

The old church was a non-conforming use under current zoning laws. Applicable building code, zoning by-laws, accessibility requirements, site limitations, and cost considerations will rule out or limit some proposals, such as expanded parking or having a basement. Some types of changes in design would entail large additional costs (for example, switching from pews to chairs). Restroom(s) will be required, and difficult problems will have to be solved in order to comply with septic requirements.

The exact amount of insurance available for rebuilding is still being researched and discussed with the insurer and is yet to be determined.

If the congregation decides to rebuild, the design and rebuilding process can be a very positive experience, if the congregation is appropriately engaged in the design and building phases. Efforts should be made to assure that the congregation is kept informed and involved, and that its views are sought and respected with regard to matters such as the approval of conceptual and design issues.

Critical Dates to be Considered

January 17, 2010. Date of the fire

July 16, 2010. Zoning laws say that we must indicate to the Town that we are rebuilding within 6 months (it is not clear what would be required to do this.) Once a permit is taken, we have six months to begin work. If work has not begun by that period, we may apply for six-month extensions. There is no ultimate limit on actual time to completion but work "must proceed in good faith continuously until completion so far as is reasonably practical under the circumstances."

January 16, 2011. The insurance policy may require that construction start within one year.

January 16, 2012. The insurance policy may require that we complete rebuilding within 2 years, but we may be able to apply for extensions.

B. ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Preface and Methodology- On February 20-21, the Deacons developed a questionnaire to assess community wishes and concerns regarding the rebuilding of the church. They provided it to the Options Committee, which was to disseminate it and analyze the responses. The Options Committee provided an on-line method (Survey Monkey) by which members of the congregation could answer the questionnaire and also made printed questionnaires available at the Parish House or on request.

For three Sundays, beginning on Sunday, February 28, the Options Committee made an announcement in church about the questionnaire, how it could be submitted (on-line or by using a printed form), and when it was due (March 15). On February 28, the Options Committee also sent announcements about the questionnaire (with a link to Survey Monkey) to all the email addresses the church had for the congregation. Other people for whom the church had records but no email address were contacted by telephone or regular mail. In total, approximately 180 people were contacted. Everyone was strongly encouraged to submit a response to the questionnaire. Printed copies of the questionnaire and a box in which completed questionnaires could be submitted were available on the coffee counter of the Parish House.

Every printed questionnaire that the Options Committee received, including a small number received late, was manually typed into Survey Monkey so as to facilitate compilation of the results. A total of 119 questionnaires were received. Because there was no limit on the number of people from any one household who could respond, the number of households responding is probably smaller than the number of responses received. We note also that some people did not answer every question.

While people submitting responses to the questionnaire were asked to identify themselves, the Options Committee reviewed the responses without seeing any identifying information about the persons making them. However, separate lists of people who responded to Questions 10 and 11 by offering to provide help, and the nature of the help they were offering, were prepared and have been provided to the Deacons for use as the church goes forward.

Many of the questions asked the responder to rank the importance of something on a scale of 1 to 5. The responses to such questions are displayed in charts below. Many of the questions also permitted comments. The Committee found it helpful to group together the comments made by persons who had given a particular rank. We found that people who gave one ranking often made comments that were similar to those who had given another ranking, suggesting either that people had interpreted the question differently or that some people, anticipating that what they really wanted might not be possible or might not be the congregation's choice, were prepared to compromise to some extent.

We note also that some people made the same comment more than once (in response to different questions), and that no attempt was made to limit the number of responses from any one household.

Finally, we note that people sometimes mentioned, in response to one question, something that could as easily have been made with respect to another question. For instance, in a comment regarding question #1 (the experience of worshiping), someone might mention that they loved the "Gothic" windows or doors, which relates to question #6 (importance of resemblance to the exterior of the prior church). We have considered such a comment in connection with the appropriate question.

For all of these reasons the Options Committee has presented an assessment of the overall tenor of the responses.

1. What three words would you use to describe the qualities and essence of your experience worshiping at the West Cummington Church?

Number of people responding: 113

For this question, we found it most useful to group together words of similar character, so as to arrive at what seemed to be common themes. For instance, one of the three largest categories was "*love and community*", in which we included words such as "friendship, connected, caring, inclusive, tolerant, and welcoming."

Another category was related to a *sense of peace* and included words such as "quiet, intimate, serene and private."

Yet another category referred to a *spiritual* quality, in both a traditional "religious" sense (words like "worship, holy, prayer, grace") and a sense of provoking thought ("enlightening, deepening, inspiring, profound, stimulating, questioning, healing)."

There were a great many "take-aways" that we'll call "miscellaneous feeling words". Examples are "honest, authentic, empower, alive, boisterous, quirky, diverse, surprises, unique, nature-bound, unusual, alive, real, personal, strength." Warm references were made to Steve Philbrick, sermons, poetry, music and harmony.

2. Please share your thoughts about the physical elements of the church building which most enriched your worship experience.

Number of responses: 114

It was remarkable how many times people commented, in this and a number of other questions, on qualities linked to the interior or exterior of the old church (“simplicity, light, pure, timeless, basic, spacious”). People seem to love the big windows that bring in warm, comfortable natural light and are open to the beautiful setting. They relate the simplicity, absence of ornamentation, and lack of pretension of the old church to the character and traditions of the church congregation and of the wider community in which it is located.

3. Please share any thoughts you have about physical elements that were not present in the old church building that might have enhanced your experience.

Number of responses: 102

Many of the items mentioned here were also mentioned elsewhere, for instance in response to #7. The item mentioned most frequently by far (38% of these comments), was bathrooms (either for guests or for members of the congregation). Other frequently mentioned items were:

- a quiet, efficient heating system that provides a more comfortable level of heat
- pews that are more comfortable (higher backs, better cushions or even curved backs similar to those in the Ashfield or Becket Congregational Churches)
- an alternative entrance with better access (for many reasons, the most important being to avoid interruption of the service by late arrivals, or to have two ways to accommodate arrivals and departures)
- a space where parents can calm a restless child and (if possible) still hear what is going on.

A smaller number of comments mentioned a space for kids’ church in the church, a stained glass element or accent, and a natural and/or artistic element.

There were a few comments about icons or religious symbols, both from people who desire them and from people who do not want them in any new church building.

The Options Committee notes that there may be extra costs and/or impediments involved with some of these items, as follows:

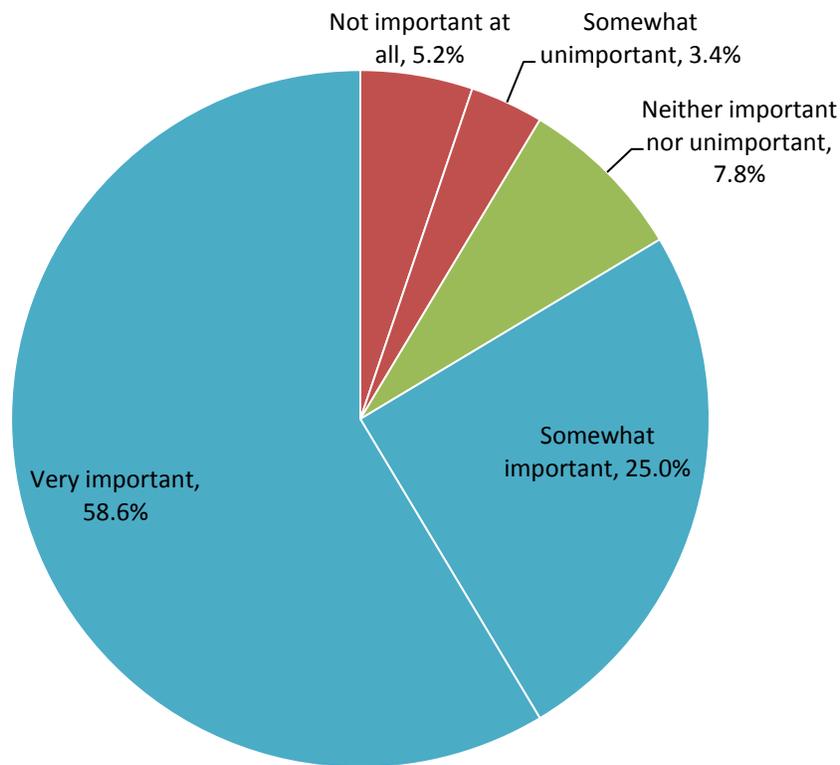
- Bathrooms: Although at least one restroom will be required, there are site limitations such as bringing water into the building, the cost of obtaining it, and the difficulty in locating a septic system due to lack of physical space and possible ledge. Composting toilets may present alternative pros and cons that will be researched further.
- Radiant heating - this kind of heating was considered for the Parish House. It is probably not efficient for a building used only occasionally and/or for short periods of time.
- Kids’ church, a basement, or an addition to the structure - this could involve substantial expense because of the ledge and water conditions on the site. Furthermore, an addition could jeopardize the grandfathering of the footprint.

4. How important is it to you to rebuild a church on the existing site in West Cummington?

116 of the 119 respondents answered this question, and 83.6% of those responding felt it was somewhat important or very important to rebuild the church on the existing site.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	5.2%	6
Somewhat unimportant	3.4%	4
Neither important nor unimportant	7.8%	9
Somewhat important	25.0%	29
Very important	58.6%	68
<i>answered question</i>		116
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Chart 1- How important is it to you to rebuild a church on the existing site in West Cummington?



5. If rebuilding on the site is NOT important to you, what alternative action would you propose?

The intent of this question was to be sure that the voices of those who feel strongly that the congregation should do something OTHER THAN building on the existing site were heard. Nevertheless, though only 19 people rated rebuilding on the existing site as not important,

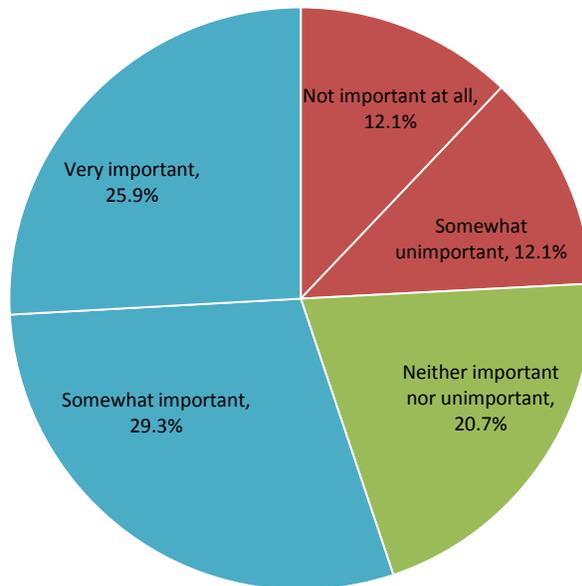
somewhat unimportant or neither important nor unimportant, 51 people made a comment. Despite this confusion, the ideas from those people who felt it not important to rebuild on the site, were very similar to the suggestions/brainstorming that came from the people who feel it is important to rebuild on the site.

The ideas included joining with another church, such as the Cummington Village Church or the Windsor Congregational Church, rebuilding on another site that is easier to access and has more parking spaces or using the Parish House as our place of worship.

6. If you would like a new church to be built in West Cummington, please rank how important resemblance to the prior church's exterior would be to you, on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important).

Resemblance to prior church's exterior		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	12.1%	14
Somewhat unimportant	12.1%	14
Neither important nor unimportant	20.7%	24
Somewhat important	29.3%	34
Very important	25.9%	30
Comments		76
<i>answered question</i>		116
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Chart 2- How important resemblance to the prior church's exterior.



The comments for this question covered the spectrum from wishing to replicate the old church to wanting to explore all design possibilities rather than “live in the past.”

Taken as a whole, the comments overwhelmingly favored building a traditional New England church. While a number of people “want the old church back,” most recognized that an exact replica might not be possible given factors such as cost, building code requirements and zoning limitations, or the need for better heating and energy efficiency. Favorite aspects of the exterior were mentioned: the windows, the bell tower, the Gothic detailing around the doors and windows, white, wooden, in keeping with its neighbors, carrying forward the traditions of those who came before us while incorporating our own values and looking forward, creating a beautiful church that would be seen by and pleasing to both the local community and travelers passing by on the highway.

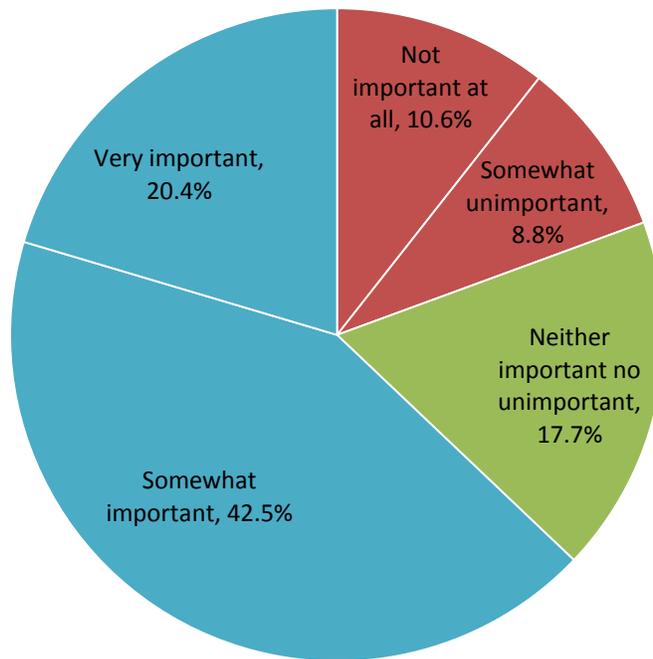
There was a sense that people were respectful of what others in the congregation might want; they realized that maybe they couldn’t have all they wanted, and they wanted to show they were flexible and wanted something that would be satisfying to the entire congregation.

In this question and others relating to the physical building, many people commented that we have the resources and know-how to build a traditional wooden church. However, there were a few other nontraditional ideas.

7. If you would like a new church to be built in West Cummington, please rank how important resemblance to the prior church’s interior would be to you, on a scale from not important at all to very important:

Resemblance to prior church's interior		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	10.6%	12
Somewhat unimportant	8.8%	10
Neither important no unimportant	17.7%	20
Somewhat important	42.5%	48
Very important	20.4%	23
Comments		72
<i>answered question</i>		113
<i>skipped question</i>		6

Chart 3- Important resemblance to the prior church's interior.



Many people expressed the desire for something as close as possible to the old church. Others thought that energy and building code requirements would prevent that, but they mentioned aspects of the old church they would like to see in a new one. There was no one who said he/she did not like the old church, but there were some who did not like one or another feature (for instance, the elevated platform area where the pulpit sits) or who suggested certain additions or changes. However, there were some who mentioned that they were open to new ideas or looked forward to something entirely new.

Some themes were mentioned repeatedly: simplicity, comfortable space for people of all beliefs, large windows/light, the sloping floor, acoustics, the size and intimacy of the space, the congregation facing the front doors, the vestibule.

Many comments had to do with improvements: the use of environmentally friendly materials and design (energy efficient windows, passive solar, solar heat, hypoallergenic materials), and the need for bathrooms/water, closets, and a separate room for crying babies.

There were miscellaneous comments about various other aspects of the interior: several people wanted to have a post and beam building, possibly with natural elements such as exposed debarked tree limbs. Regarding the ceiling, suggestions were to lower it to save heat, to open it to give more height and a view of the peaked roof, to retain a vaulted ceiling, to do nothing to the ceiling that would hurt the acoustics, or to have a metal ceiling as in the old church.

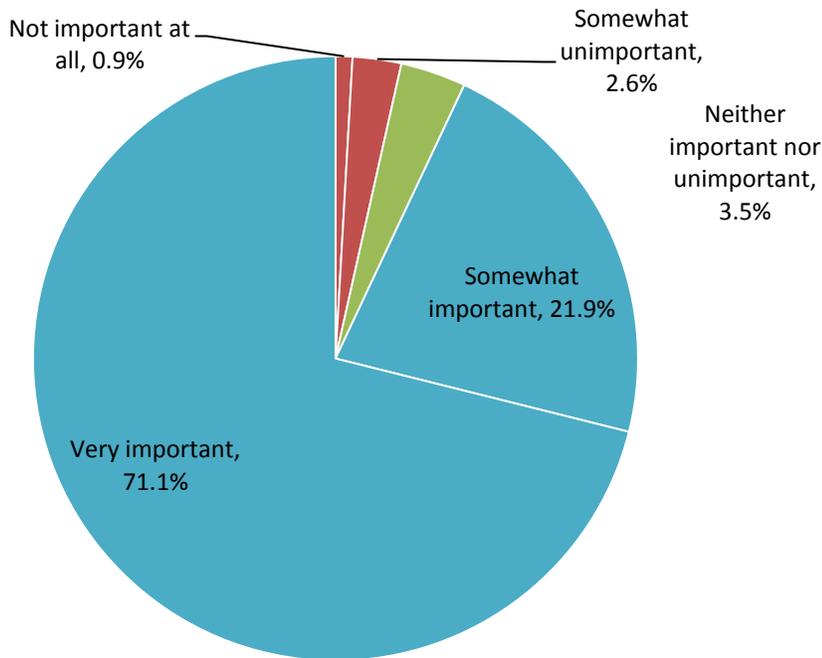
We note that in response to question 1, there were many who mentioned the front entrance and how they felt welcomed by the congregation as they walked into the church. There were many

who felt that keeping the new church close to the original church's historic period would be important - they loved the old, timeless feel of the old church. A number of people mentioned the location (“love where it sits”) and the pitch of the floor, which allowed for a good view of the pulpit/stage, or the colors, or the ceiling.

8. If you would like a new church to be built in West Cummington, please rank how important green building and use of local resources would be to you, on a scale from not important at all to very important:

Using green/local materials, labor and resources whenever possible.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	0.9%	1
Somewhat unimportant	2.6%	3
Neither important nor unimportant	3.5%	4
Somewhat important	21.9%	25
Very important	71.1%	81
Comments		69
<i>answered question</i>		114
<i>skipped question</i>		5

Chart 4- Important to use green/local materials, labor and resources.



There was overwhelming support, especially from the children in the kids’ church, for the use of local resources, such as labor, materials, professional experience, and artisans. Comments referred to the benefits to the local economy and the desirability of involving the community in

the rebuilding of the church, as well as the importance to most of our congregation of “caring for the earth”. To some, “local” is more important than “green”.

There were, however, cautionary notes:

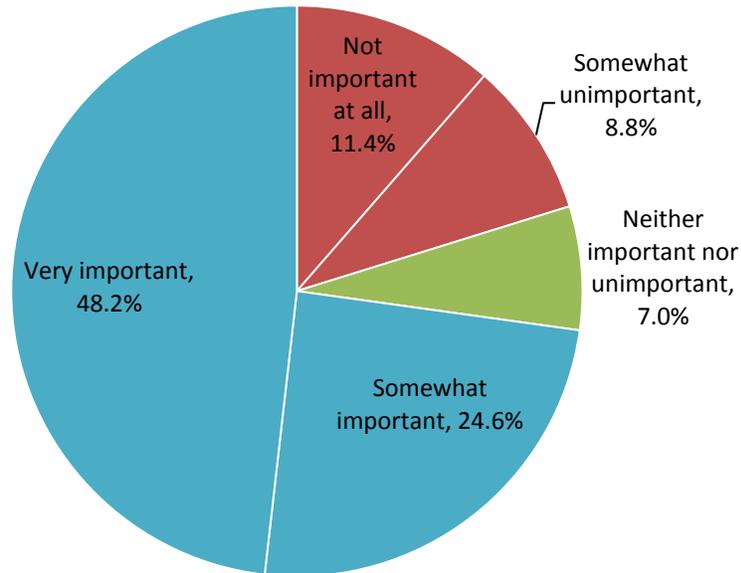
- expect trade-offs based on costs, design, building constraints, functionality, time, availability of materials and skills, and so forth
- what is “green” can be debated
- while new technologies and opportunities should be explored, some “green” technologies are expensive, problematic, or lacking an adequate track record.
- use of experienced professionals is important and may require going “outside”
- some technologies may be impractical - e.g., using solar panels would require re-orienting the church
- LEEDS certification would be nice but may be prohibited by cost factors
- the health of the congregation should be kept in mind: some people in the congregation, especially children, have chemical sensitivities, so manufactured products that release gases or chemicals should not be used, and we should be aware that ultra-tight buildings can have mold problems.

Several people mentioned particular wishes: solar panels, insulation, energy-efficient heating systems, fire breaks. One person said, “Don’t get hung up on displaying local craftsmen’s or artists’ work.” Another wanted a post-and-beam building with a dropped ceiling.

9. If you would like a new church to be built in West Cummington, please rank how important would adaptable space be to you, on a scale from not important at all to very important:

Adaptable space that is also suitable for concerts, talks and other community gatherings.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	11.4%	13
Somewhat unimportant	8.8%	10
Neither important nor unimportant	7.0%	8
Somewhat important	24.6%	28
Very important	48.2%	55
Comments		75
	<i>answered question</i>	114
	<i>skipped question</i>	5

Chart 5- How important would adaptable space be?

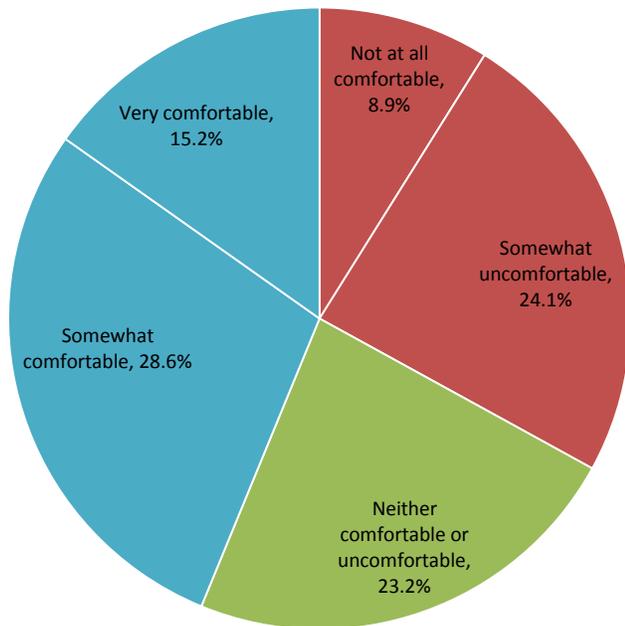


The predominant response was that the first purpose is for the space to serve the spiritual needs of the congregation at Sunday services, baptisms, weddings, and the like. Holding concerts, poetry readings, and the like is part of who we are and what we do for the community, but the previous space was adequate for these purposes. Some said that because of the availability of the Parish House which has flat floors and moveable chairs, we do not need to adapt the church space for uses for which the Parish House or other community buildings (e.g., Cummington Community House) are suitable. The previous church did lack some things that might be needed, though: bathrooms, sprinkler system, alarm.

10. How comfortable would you be in spending more than the currently available resources for rebuilding?

How comfortable would you be in spending more than the currently available resources for rebuilding?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all comfortable	8.9%	10
Somewhat uncomfortable	24.1%	27
Neither comfortable or uncomfortable	23.2%	26
Somewhat comfortable	28.6%	32
Very comfortable	15.2%	17
<i>answered question</i>		112
<i>skipped question</i>		7

Chart 6- How comfortable would you be in spending more than the currently available resources for rebuilding?



The Options Committee feels that the responses to this question may be interpreted as a request for fiscal caution. Although there is a slightly greater level of comfort vs. discomfort among respondents for spending beyond currently available resources, the numbers seem to indicate that the congregation has mixed feelings on this topic.

11. If you are comfortable exceeding the available resources, would you be willing to contribute or help raise the additional money that may be needed?

94 people answered this question, exceeding the number who indicated, in question #10, that they were comfortable with spending more than current resources.

Many respondents expressed a willingness to contribute, help raise additional funds, or both (over half responded with a simple, unqualified “yes” or “absolutely”). Even with this willingness, the comments reveal a strong desire to remain within our available funds if possible. Comments emphasized developing a modest plan, as well as utilizing donations and volunteers as measures to keep costs down.

C. Rebuilding - Site, Zoning, Building Code, and Other Constraints

1. Changing the Size, Footprint, and/or Location of the Church

A new church that varies from the original, i.e. larger, more stories, not on original footprint, etc. requires compliance with the zoning by-laws. Because of the small site, a variance from the Board of Appeals will be required for lot size and setbacks. There is also a problem providing

enough off-street parking on the current lot. Special permits and variances both require public hearings.

A building of more than one story will require a change in construction type (more non-combustible materials) or the installation of an automatic sprinkler system. It will also require an accessible elevator to service between floors.

A larger building with a larger seating capacity will require proportionally more exits, more wheelchair spaces, restroom fixtures, etc. If the original size is maintained but the seats are not fixed (pews), the capacity as per the code is increased from the original 190 persons (1 person per 18" of bench) to 300 persons (1 person per 7 gross square feet of floor), which will affect zoning (parking requirements), Building Code compliance, accessibility requirements, number of restroom fixtures, and size of septic system.

2. Reconstruction of the Church as it Originally Stood

Under the zoning by-laws of the Town of Cummington, the old church was a non-conforming structure; that is, it failed to meet one or more of the town's current by-laws (lot size, setbacks, off-street parking). However, the zoning by-laws allow the church to be rebuilt "if the non-conforming nature of the structure is not increased." Rebuilding the same structure on its original footprint does not require a special permit or variance. Because of the former rear entrance projection, the town will allow us to add an additional five feet of depth beyond the rear wall of the original structure.

Rebuilding does require compliance with the State Building Code (780 CMR), the Architectural Access Board (521 CMR), the Plumbing Code (248 CMR), and the Dept. of Environmental Protection (310 CMR) among others.

Since any construction type is permitted, the building may be rebuilt of the same materials used originally, i.e. wood. The State Building Code permits the use of native wood (locally grown and sawed) *provided* it is stamped by a licensed Native Wood Producer. From our understanding of the Code, sprinklers are not required, but the building will need a manual fire alarm system (pull stations), portable fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide detectors, and emergency exit lighting. Aisles must be at least 42" wide. Exit doors must open in the direction of travel (out). The building will have to be insulated and meet the same energy conservation requirements as a new home. The floor, wall, and ceiling cavities of the former church could have been insulated to meet or exceed these requirements. Thus the new building can look identical to the original and still meet the Energy Code.

Most importantly, the new building will require restrooms. For restrooms, the building will require a well and septic field. The septic field may be a problem because of the small site and large building (40' x 54'). If a septic field can't work, a tight tank (which is pumped periodically) may be necessary. Because this was a pre-existing building, there may be some leeway granted on the number of restroom fixtures and the size and layout of the septic system.

The new church is also required to comply with the Architectural Access Board. All public portions of the building - parking, entrance, seating, stage, and restrooms - shall be accessible by the physically handicapped. Though two exits are required by the Code, only one needs to be accessible. Four wheelchair spaces are required and those proportionally distributed. Ramps with a slope greater than 1 in 20 require handrails on both sides. The new church can

have a similar floor slope to the original and not require handrails. An assistive listening system is also required.

Excavation for the new building's foundation and installation of a septic field or tight tank requires filing a Notice of Intent with the Town's Conservation Commission.

Any structure with a volume over 35,000 cubic feet falls under Construction Control (our church was about 50,000 cf.). A Massachusetts registered Architect or Engineer is required to prepare and stamp drawings and to make periodic site visits during construction.

3. Acoustics

Because it is apparent that many parishioners loved the acoustics within the old building, it should likewise be considered important in the new one. If the new structure is an exact replica of the old, that is, it has the same size, proportion, the same materials and interior furnishings; there is a greater likelihood that the acoustics should be the same. However, it would seem prudent to involve an acoustic specialist in the design of the building.

4. Solar panels

We made a call to the Solar Store in Greenfield and talked with Mark Skinder, one of the owners. Reviewing the site on the internet, his impression was that the site would be problematic. The orientation of the building, the partial steeple (if it is included in the design), and the trees would not allow for an optimum light. Given these variables, the minimal usage, and the absence of tax credits that would help defray the cost, he was of the opinion that there were better energy saving and "green" choices to make. Still, should the congregation decide that this was important and a priority, he did not think installation during construction, rather than later, would result in a significant cost saving.

D. Church Fire Insurance

The church building was covered by a "replacement cost" insurance policy that would pay to rebuild the church exactly as it was, with a limit of up to approximately \$450,000. The \$450,000 limit is not what we would necessarily receive, as we will explain.

The policy also contains additional "pools" of money to cover specific items. One "pool" allows for up to \$25,000 to replace the "contents" of the church. As one person explained it, things that would fall out if the church were picked up, and turned upside down (e.g., piano, quilt, pew cushions, hymnals, non-affixed tables/chairs/podium), are "contents." Things that were affixed to the building (e.g., pews, wall sconces) are not "contents."

There is a "pool" of money to cover the demolition and clean-up of the site and a "pool" to pay for cost increases to meet current building codes. Costs in excess of the pool amounts for items covered by the pools will not be paid for by our insurance. For example, it appears that current codes will require at least one bathroom to be installed, but only the first \$5,000 of the cost of complying with this requirement would be covered by this "pool."

The "replacement cost" (the cost of rebuilding the church exactly as it was before the fire) is determined as follows. The insurance company comes up with a detailed evaluation of how the building was built, the quality of materials used, current labor and material costs, etc., to arrive

at its estimate of what it would currently cost to replicate that building. We have received this estimate from the insurance company's adjuster – it is approximately \$389,000. The insurance company has also come up with an amount that represents depreciation on the building. Their estimate is approximately \$49,000.

“Replacement cost” policies are extremely detailed and complex. The Deacons and the Finance and Options Committees have been working with the resources within our community to review the insurance company's estimates, but we will probably need outside help to guide us in arriving at a final settlement with the insurance company. We hope to establish that the true cost of replacing the old church as it was built is higher than the insurance company's estimate, if we succeed the \$389,000 number would be higher (but not in excess of the \$450,000 policy limit). We have the burden of establishing that our estimate is correct. Since we have not yet arrived at a satisfactory settlement with the insurance company, we will use the insurance company's current cost estimates in illustrating how the insurance works.

It is important to understand that while the amount payable under the policy is based primarily on what it would cost to replace the old church, we are not required to build a replica of the old church. However, if we decide not to build a new church of any type, we will receive only what it would have cost to replace the old church (\$389,000) minus the depreciation on the old church (\$49,000), or a total of \$340,000. Regardless of whether or not we build a new church, we anticipate that we will receive the full amount of the pool for “contents” and that the “demolition and clean-up” pool would cover most or all of those costs.

As we understand it, we have six months from the date of the fire to indicate to the insurance company whether or not we are going to rebuild. If we decide to rebuild, we assume that the cost of building the new church will equal or exceed \$340,000.

- If the actual cost of building the new church exceeded \$340,000, we would be paid for the amount over \$340,000, but only up to \$49,000. Thus, if the church cost \$375,000 to build, we would receive \$375,000.
- If actual cost of building the new church equaled \$389,000, we would be paid \$389,000.
- If the actual cost of building the new church exceeded \$389,000, we would still receive only \$389,000, and we would have to use other WCCC resources to pay the remainder of the cost.

Again, it is important to remember that the Deacons and the Finance and Options Committees are still working to ensure that we receive proper compensation from our policy. It is possible that through these efforts the amount available to us to rebuild will be higher than the figures used above, but we would not recover from the insurance company anything in excess of the \$450,000 limit, plus the “pools”.

E. Process Going Forward

This part of our report deals with suggestions regarding ways to address the emotional needs of the congregation in the event that WCCC rebuilds the church.

1. *Process of rebuilding as a positive experience.* Given the results of the questionnaire, it seems likely that WCCC will choose to rebuild the church. This task will be an emotional challenge, as well as a concrete one. We have heard many people express the hopeful prediction that, in the end, the process of rebuilding will be positive, strengthening our community rather than dividing it. We share this prediction. The possibility exists, however, for the latter to occur. We want to identify steps to minimize this risk.

2. *Grieving/adjustment since the fire.* Members of the congregation seem engaged in whatever activities and conversation are necessary to help with this early phase of adjustment following the fire. We suspect that these activities will continue to occur in a spontaneous, organic fashion, typical of WCCC. We do not have any specific recommendations to make about this process.

3. *Emotional challenge of design.* We predict that the process of reaching a design will be the most difficult emotional challenge for the congregation. This is where emotions will rise again, disagreement will be most apparent and alive, and the risk for a divisive process will be most acute. We recommend that the following objectives be embedded in the process of reaching a design:

- Respect for both urges - “hurry up” and “slow down” – expressed within the congregation.
- Fostering a sense of ownership of the design among the congregation.
- Enhancing transparency through regular, adequate communication between designers and congregation.

4. *Recommendations for the design phase.* We assume that the church will form appropriate committees to go forward with the design and building of a new church. We have the following recommendations regarding the design phase of this work:

- Hire an architect to produce a design. This person(s) must have the ability and desire to work with those members of the WCCC community who have design/build expertise.
- Recognize WCCC’s who have relevant expertise and are willing to be called upon by the architect, design and building committees.
- The design committee should be charged with ensuring that input and communication with the congregation is honored.
- The architect should meet with the entire congregation for a mutual “getting to know you” prior to starting a design.
- The architect should meet with the congregation early in the conceptual phase of the design, bringing preliminary design concepts for the congregation’s response.

Respectfully submitted,

The Options Committee: Michael Barrett, Will Bundy, Peg Cowen, John Jones, John Perkins, Hattie Plehn (chair), and Jack Sobon

Postscript

Formation of and charge to the Options Committee

The Options Committee was formed by the Deacons in response to the following resolution of the congregation made on January 31, 2010:

Deacons will appoint an exploratory committee to gather ideas from the church community and assess all options, their feasibility and implications, and report back to the congregation by or before May 1.

The Deacons charged the Options Committee to:

Make a written report to the congregation on the desirability and feasibility of two options: One, building on the existing site; Two, affiliating with a neighboring church should we receive such an offer. In making this report, primary attention should be given to ideas from the church community. Other factors to be considered are: financial, legal, technical, social, aesthetic, and timeframe.

It was also suggested that the committee design a process by which a building would be built, should that be the congregation's decision. The Deacons requested that the report be submitted to them no later than April 15. Thereafter the Options Committee made minor changes to the draft.