Council Corner

To begin this month's column, the Congregational Council would like to thank you for participating in a special congregational meeting on Sunday, March 19 to authorize the installation of a new Trane heat pump/air conditioning system for Spies Hall. In case you missed the meeting, Council presented a brief history of the climate control system in Spies Hall dating to the opening of that section of the building in 2002. As the system has evolved over the past twenty years, the Property Committee evaluated and recommended what they believe will be the best upgrade and installation for Spies Hall at this time. The special meeting concluded with a 35-0 vote to install a Trane system that will work in tandem with two smaller heat pumps to provide heating, cooling, and ventilation to Spies Hall in the most energy efficient manner. The cost of the system is $14166, and Affordable Comfort will be installing the unit and additional ductwork the week of April 3 (just about the time you'll be reading this column).

As I thought about possible topics for this month's *Council Corner*, it occurred to me that this matter of heating and cooling the space we live, work, and worship in is not something that we should take lightly. The reality of global warming and climate crisis is challenging each of us to examine our role in being good stewards of our planet while living lives that allow us to be productive, responsible citizens. We Americans take air conditioning for granted—in our pleasure and work vehicles, in our homes, in our schools and stores, and in our houses of worship. However, here at St. Paul we did not find it necessary to add air conditioning to the sanctuary until 2004, two years after we moved into our new building. Although we humans like to think that we are in control of our environment and can make minor adjustments to meet our climate and comfort needs, we're only fooling ourselves. The best we can do is to adjust to the times and the noticeable changes in temperature and precipitation. It's very clear that the seasons in the Poconos are changing more rapidly than we could have ever imagined, bringing with them less snow in the winter and more 90-degree days in the summer. How we choose to adjust to those changes is up to us as individuals and as a church family. As we "stand in line" as consumers of a regional, national, and international power grid that is still rooted in the burning of fossil fuels, each of us can see the long-term dilemma. Of course, acting on that dilemma requires faith in our God and knowledge of what we believe are the best solutions.

Big buildings can be difficult to heat and cool. Many of us remember the large coal furnaces that heated our schools, churches, and homes sixty years ago. Coal trucks making local deliveries were common then, replaced by heating oil trucks that are still with us today. Local schools added air conditioning as they upgraded HVAC systems or constructed new buildings from the 1970's on. When I was a freshman at East Stroudsburg University in 1969, I enjoyed classes in the old Stroud Hall for a year; it was heated by a central campus boiler system, and students were used to hearing the clanging and pinging of pipes feeding the radiator system as they attended classes on a cold winter day. In 1970 we moved into the new Stroud Hall, and although it was spacious, flexible, and served by elevators to its four floors, it had heating and cooling challenges from the beginning. Professors routinely moved classes to empty rooms in search of either more heat or more cool air. After completing college and teaching for two years in New Jersey, I returned to the Poconos to take a job in the Pocono Mountain School District. Pocono Mountain opened a new high school in 1974 (the second building on the Swiftwater campus, the one with the pool), and there were additional challenges to that HVAC system from the very beginning. It's just the nature of big buildings and complicated HVAC systems.

Rest assured that the Council and staff of St. Paul strive to monitor our energy use in order to provide suitable year-round temperatures for our worship and activities. We don't enjoy writing large checks to PPL Utilities any more than you do, and we also find it challenging to shop for the best overall rates for our supply of electricity. (Have you noticed how that process has changed as energy costs around the world have increased in the last year?) Still, as we look at the living conditions throughout the world, how can we complain about our occasional setbacks?

Council Meeting Highlights:

As mentioned in my March *Council Corner* column, our March 16 meeting was reserved for a demonstration workshop of **The Power of Asset Mapping**. Pastor Rebecca Knox, Pastor of Zion Spies Lutheran Church, Reading, and a Chaplain in the Reading Hospital Chaplaincy Program (Tower Health), provided Council with a lively and engaging workshop in ninety minutes. Council practiced *recognizing our assets, connecting the dots, and voting with our feet*—the three main steps to asset managing. From this workshop Council developed two potential summer activities: a summer ice cream social for the community, and a community yard

sale/flea market event tentatively scheduled for July 15. Council will continue its discussion of asset managing at its next meeting on April 20.
Best wishes to you and your family for a Blessed Easter season!

Bill Below

Council President