Report on Grace Church Office Building: Flooded, Gutted, Restored

On July 31, 2009, replacement of the leaking flat roof which covered the offices, sacristy, St. Martha's, etc, a total of 7200 square feet of building was started. The contract with Jottan Roofing stipulated that no more roof would be removed than could be replaced the same day. Late in the afternoon after Jottan left the premises there was a huge deluge of 4 inches of rain in Merchantville. At about six p.m., the Welcoming Committee which was preparing an open house in the Rectory, our temporary offices, entered the door to the building and heard what sounded like a waterfall. When we walked into the hall water was pouring through the ceilings of the building and was already more than an inch deep on all the floors. Apparently what had happened was the tar used to seal the roof between the old and the new had melted the foam of the old roof. The result was that there was no seal at all. We discovered about 3 inches of water pouring into the entire building. Water continued to enter the building for several weeks, apparently being trapped in the concrete above and gradually leaking through. Water poured through the first floor into the basement, ruining the ceilings, floors, and contents.

Church Insurance was called and the adjustor arrived. He said that the whole building would probably need to be gutted. We were instructed that neither members of the parish nor any member of their family could be hired or do any volunteer work on the building, and that anyone except contractors, wardens, and the Interim Rector should not enter the building, for safety and for insurance purposes.

The next day when I went downstairs and turned on the lights in the sorting room, flames shot out of the fixtures. I quickly called the adjustor asking what I should do. I was instructed that if I knew a general contractor that I trusted to call and ask them to send their electrical sub. I did, and Ernie Perino arrived shortly and made the problem safe. The contractor that was called was Sweeney Construction who had built two buildings for us at Grace church Pemberton, had been low bidder and did excellent work.

Because of the danger of asbestos contamination from the ceilings we could not begin the process of drying the building until environmental testing was done so mold continued to grow. EDI was hired and began the work. Mold was very high, but no asbestos contamination was found, and a remediation company, Adam Industrial, started the cleanup work. They also gutted the building and disposed of the moldy contents. The two rooms with the most contamination were the sorting room and the Church School Office where the entire contents were contaminated and had to be disposed of by the remediation company. This process took weeks, overseen by Tom Sweeney. All of the flooring had to be removed by an asbestos remediator, VMC. All of the vestments had to be sent out to be cleaned. Most of the contents were not salvageable. Finally after a multitude of testings and cleanings, the building was deemed safe to begin reconstruction.

Because the kitchen floor was so damaged by the water, **everything** had to be removed from the kitchen, including all the equipment and counters. When the contractor looked for the gas shut off valve to remove the stoves, there wasn't any in the kitchen and none in the room underneath the kitchen. Mike Sweeney spent hours following gas lines all through the buildings. I went with him part of the time, opening various locked doors so he could follow the pipes. Finally we ended up in the train room. He said that the shut off had to be there, which made no sense to me. It was so far from the

kitchen gas stoves! I left him there and later he told me he had found the shut off hidden in the ceiling of the train room. Thus, they were then able to remove the stoves. In addition, an epoxy floor was poured in the kitchen after everything was removed. It has no seams and the floor goes right up the walls for several inches which will contain any spills.

Tom Sweeney's meticulous recording of the damage and what was required for reconstruction helped tremendously in the insurance settlement. Douglas Held was the estimator hired by Church Insurance to evaluate the damage and the cost for repair. Tom's excellent work enabled us to increase the amount we received by thousands of dollars. We were also blessed by a fine adjustor from Church Insurance. One area where we were not able to recover insurance money was for the repainting of the basement. This was because it was obvious to the Insurance adjustor and to J.S. Held (and to us, really) that the damage to the walls and the radiators was caused by years of water draining from the outside into the building because of poor grading.

A walk through the building will demonstrate the work that was done. It was covered in it's entirely by the insurance settlement. A new building is the result. The kitchen floor is beautiful!

Of note is the newly installed stoves and ovens. They were not covered by insurance, but the old stoves were in deplorable condition, both in terms of function and appearance. A short- term stove fund enabled us to purchase decent, second-hand, working stoves and ovens.

Some of the building deficiencies not related to flood, but in serious need of correction were repaired by Sweeney Construction and also paid for by the insurance settlement. They were as follows:

Exterior drainage issues resulted in the removal and replacement of three windows from the old thrift shop storage room the on basement level, reconstruction of 6 window well units on the parking lot side of building with repair of damage to them and raising up where necessary, regrading and mulching, removal of overgrown trees and shrubs, and change of design and addition of exterior pvc drain piping. 10 windows were replaced with double hung, energy-star windows on parking lot side. These will save many dollars in utility bills. In addition, one of the old windows was so damaged that it could not be closed completely.

Plumbing: Dishwasher faucet did not work properly and was replaced because parts were unavailable. Quick connects were added to both new ranges, repaired leaking drain to water fill, repaired leaking faucet in men's room. Tom Sweeney is having a shut- off valve added to the gas lines in the restored building for safety as well as convenience sake.

Electric: Changed wiring to water heater on dishwasher so that it can be shut down when not in use. Regulator was bad on dishwasher heater and changed. A wire was burned out in the heater. Two emergency lights which did not work were replaced. CAT5 cable and telephone was added to all offices. Service disconnect was added to dishwasher (code issue). 3 phase sub panel was added in mechanical room to hold added circuit breakers.

HVAC: Investigated cut pipes in church where a section of heat was not working, investigated bad zone valve for library and back stairwell. Changed thermostats and added lock boxes to 13 units. Rebuilt

both Air Conditioner boxes. Purchased and installed new air conditioning unit in outer office. Repaired and cleaned vestibule heater and aqua stat. Cleaned kitchen heater and replaced aqua stat. Supplied and installed two new Honeywell 3-way-mixing valve bodies, two new Honeywell modulator motors including linkage to connect motors to valve bodies and all control wiring involved.

Fire alarm system: Rewired smoke detectors, replaced damaged smoke detectors, repaired control panel, replaced battery.

The result of the restoration is that the building is much more functional and in much better repair than before the flood.

I met with Toby Christophson the owner of Jottan Roofing several times to discuss the difficulties of the roof. One thing we are stuck with is that the pitch of the roof was not designed steep enough so that the water will drain out of all the swales in the roof. I asked him if the roof would ever leak, and he said that eventually it would, if proper maintenance was not kept up. He said that a cotter tool should be used at least every two years to check the seams (he drew a picture of that for me. It is in the file). If the tool went up into the seam too far then additional material should be put under the seam. The other thing was that ice on the roof should never be broken up because that would cause damage to the roofing material itself. We have already experienced that in the winter months there will probably always be ice or water on part of the roof, and we have to live with it. We are fortunate that the Garland Company has given us a 20-year warranty on the roof.

I will always be grateful to Tom and Mike Sweeney and to Sweeney Construction for their fine work, knowledge, honesty, and wonderful attitude. They have been tremendous blessing to me and to Grace Church.

Faithfully and respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Joan R. Watson, Interim Rector