



The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel
Bishop of Olympia

August 19, 2010

St. James Episcopal Church
810 Puget Street
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284

Dear Ones,

For the safety all concerned, I am asking that St. James temporarily move its worship, and all other activities, out of its building until a more robust evaluation of its safety and stability can be conducted. I know this decision has come as a shock to you. I share that feeling but I also know I cannot possibly feel its impact like you do.

I write this letter to explain a bit about my decision and to further explain some of what might happen next. I became aware of the complexity of this issue only recently. Mr. Charles Ramsden of the Church Insurance Group was made aware of the report of the structural engineer on a recent routine visit to our diocese. After viewing the report he asked Mr. Ralph Provencal, a forensic architect who does risk assessments for Church Insurance, to look at the report and your building. This was done early in June 2010. It was communicated to Mr. Ramsden who called me. It is the considered opinion of both Mr. Provencal and Mr. Ramsden that the structure remains unsound. Once I became aware of the opinion of these two experts I could not in good conscience fail to take action. I do it only as due diligence and for the safety of all who inhabit or visit the building. For that reason I asked the Canon to the Ordinary to work with your clergy leadership on this matter. In addition, Mr. Bill Goodenough, on behalf of the Board of Directors, will work with you on next steps, which may include exploring ways to prove the structural soundness of the building. However, until I have assurance of that I must take this action. I know that you have done much good work to try to mitigate this and I appreciate that. On my visit several months ago I was pleased to see that work and all the love and care you have put into that building. That makes this decision even more difficult.

At its meeting yesterday the Board of Directors were advised of the report from the structural engineer and subsequent events. They are in concurrence with the action taken. Certainly one arising issue is whether liability and building insurance can be obtained in the future. This is a valid question and in the days ahead we will work together to determine the next steps and a time line for accomplishing those steps. There are many questions for which we do not presently have answers. For the immediate future the most important thing is to insure the safety of all concerned.

I want you to think about several things, first the reality that the church is not a building, but the people. St. James' building needs to be reevaluated at the moment, but that does not, in any way, mean St. James' will not continue on and I most assuredly want to see that happen.

Blessings,

The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel
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