

Capital Campaign will help AUC 'Rise from the Ashes'

It's now been 10 years since fire devastated Aurora United Church in Aurora's downtown core.

The world has changed significantly in the decade since - including a pandemic and rising costs all around - and, due to these factors, the Church (AUC) needs a helping hand to quite literally rise from the ashes.

The 'Rise from the Ashes Capital Campaign' is a \$5 million drive to help offset the cost of the rebuild.

'This campaign marks a significant step forward in the journey to rebuild the church both in structure and in spirit,' the AUC said last week. 'Aurora United Church aims to raise \$5 million through the Rising from the Ashes campaign to support the existing funding of the construction of a new, resilient, and welcoming church building.'

In the 'before times,' Aurora United Church was able to fund the rebuild on its own, both through their reserves, money in the bank, and their partnership with Amica Retirement Residence, which will share the AUC's historic site at Yonge and Tyler Streets.

But costs from 2014 estimates are no longer reflective of reality.

Brian North, Chair of AUC's Edge Property Committee, which has steered the rebuild, said costs have risen over 60 per cent in the last four years alone.

'That has affected us terribly because we had enough money where money would be sitting in our bank accounts after the build was done. We were laughing and doing quantity surveys on a regular basis,' says North. 'Then the pandemic hit and everything went through the roof. If we didn't need the money, we didn't want to do fundraising because it would look bad. Now we're in a situation where we need it.'

'We were too far [into the project], we couldn't stop it. We were in contracts with Amica, the Town of Aurora, our building permits have gone through the roof, we'd already built the basement. You can't stop and you can't go back to before, so we have to keep going.'

The Capital Campaign had its soft launch at the end of January, formally getting off the ground on March 22.

'This campaign is an opportunity for everyone in our community to contribute to the rebirth of a cherished institution. Each donation, big or small, is a building block in our collective effort to rise from the ashes stronger than ever,' said Nancy Kerswill, Chair of Council, Aurora United Church.

Kerswill noted to The Auroran that the AUC Council is working with two professional fundraisers to help with outreach to philanthropists, foundations, and corporations, along with grant-writing, in order to meet the goal.

'We know we can't possibly [reach that goal] from just within our congregation, although the congregation's support will be amazing. Our goal is to raise the money by the end of 2024, but if we haven't met it, we'll carry on until the building opens.'

Individuals and businesses interested in contributing to the campaign are invited to visit www.auroraunitedchurch.ca for more information.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter