

FUUSM Wayside Pulpit Replacement

The Building and Grounds Committee has been exploring options to replace the wayside pulpit (outside bulletin board/felt letter board) that is used to post information about FUUSM services and activities. The old “manual” felt letter board display is falling apart and needs to be replaced.

The question is whether to replace with a similar “manual” felt letter board system with boxes of letters and symbols, or to modernize and go with an electronic LED sign as many of the churches and businesses in the area have done.

The Building and Grounds Committee is recommending that FUUSM modernize and install an electronic LED sign/wayside pulpit to replace the existing wayside pulpit. Our “Church Lady” – Dawn Hewitt and Reverend Kat are also supportive of an electronic LED sign.

In support of the LED sign, a FUUSM member has offered to pay a significant portion of the expense.

However, before proceeding, the Building and Grounds Committee would like to input from the FUUSM general membership regarding their thoughts and ideas on uses and other pros and cons. We would also like input from members regarding the use and nature of the messages to be displayed (see issues below).

Below are some of the Pros and Cons of the Manual felt letter board vs. Electronic LED signs.

The old-style manual system (Felt Letter Board) with boxes of letters and symbols

Pros:

- Less Expensive - \$1,200 to \$5,600 plus letter sets (\$60 to \$150 per set) and installation.
- Some think less intrusive

Cons:

- Less flexible re: number and length of posts
- Requires being outside carrying a box of letters – oops I spilled the whole box!
- Takes longer to post messages
- Not easily updated re: changes to messages
- Becoming obsolete
- Would also require electrical work if a lighted sign board was selected
- Larger letters needed to be seen from distance (1.5” tall viewable from <= 20 ft) and larger letters = shorter message
- Shorter warranty period – typically one year.
- Letters break and/or get lost over time.

Electronic LED Bulletin Board/Sign

Pros:

- Can be updated without having to go outside, and perhaps even from home via internet link.
- Unlimited number of messages/posts can be programmed to display on the sign.
- Messages can be easily added or updated to reflect new information or changes to planned events
- Depending upon model, it may be possible to display recorded or video events.
- Some believe an electronic LED sign may draw younger members.
- Able to display letters and graphic images
- LED lights of quality signs typically last 20,000 hours or more – typically guaranteed for 5 years.

Cons:

- Expensive
- Some may think it will detract from historic nature of the Church
- If attached to the network or accessible via Bluetooth, security must be considered – re: hackers posting/altering messages.
- Will require installation of a dedicated electric circuit to power the sign. (cost not part of proposal)

Proposal from Elite Signs:

The Building and Grounds Committee has received a proposal from Elite Signs for installation of a 4'2" wide x 2'4" tall LED sign manufactured by Optec Displays (OptecDisplay.com). This size is recommended for easy viewing from the sidewalk and vehicles at the intersection. We are considering two possible models. One has LEDs spaced 10 mm apart (\$10,405) and the second is a finer resolution with LEDs spaced 6 mm apart (\$12,165). Though more expensive, we are leaning toward the finer resolution sign for better clarity. Installation would include removal of the old sign, installation of new posts to support the weight of the sign, and placement of the existing arched FUUSM name plate on top of the new sign. Installation of a dedicated electrical circuit to power the sign is not included and would have to be done by an electrician.

Elite Signs is making arrangements with the manufacturer for an onsite demonstration of the two proposed signs and the software/computer interface that would be used to program the messages and their appearance. Prospective date for the demonstration would be around November 21st or 22nd.

The exact date is yet to be determined. When the date is finalized, we will announce it via email. You are welcome to come for the viewing and offer your suggestions and/or comments as to your preferences.

If you cannot make it to the demonstration, you can view similar signs installed by Elite at the following locations:

1. St. Michaels Catholic Church, Vienna – this is a 10mm LED sign
2. Vienna Elementary School – this is a 10mm LED sign.

Issues: These are outside of the purview of the Building and Grounds Committee and reflect more on FUUSM Policy regarding use of an LED electronic sign

Content: Because the messages/announcements on an electronic LED sign can be displayed much like a slide show, rolling ticker tape, or power point presentation, the number of messages and announcements that can be placed is unlimited. So, a decision must be made as to what kinds of messages can be displayed. Only FUUSM related services and activities? Social Justice Issues and/or meetings held by other organizations? Advertisements (as St. Michaels in Vienna does)? Activities in the church by other organizations, e.g. girl scouts, Green Sanctuary? Etc.

Who Decides Content: Is it the Board's responsibility to set a policy on message content? If not who? Once a policy is set, how will exceptions be handled?

Appearance: We would like the sign display to be eye catching but not garish, and not to detract from the appearance of the church. We need design standards, perhaps based on guidelines provided by Elite Signs and the manufacturer. Messages should have a consistent appearance. Who/what committees in FUUSM should establish or have input into these design standards?