

August 16, 2021

Pastor Brian Ferguson  
First Lutheran Church  
1208 Race Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

RE: Bell Tower Restoration

Pastor Ferguson,

Thank you for your email dated August 13, 2021, concerning reports by THP and JCA concerning conditions of the bell tower for the First Lutheran Church located at 1212 Race Street. In your email you asked for the department's evaluation of the THP report in light of conflicting conclusions presented in the JCA report.

Prior to discussing the TPH position it is important to recognize that both firms are highly respected and have continuously delivered code compliant solutions for various projects. Second it is important to understand that the criteria defined by the building code should be viewed as the baseline for design. Designs that incorporate higher safety factors are not wrong, rather they are in excess of the code requirements.

Our review of the referenced documents are relative to the minimum requirements of the Ohio Building Code (OBC). The OBC does not mandate the required repairs to the bell tower to consider earthquake loading criteria specified in the OBC for new construction projects. This is because none of the damage needing to be repair was a result of seismic activity. So, from a purely code compliance perspective, work meant to meet earthquake loading is not required.

The repair work does need to resolve the water infiltration issues and restore the structural system to conditions equivalent to those that existed during the original construction. This includes, but not limited to, all deteriorated connections, structural elements (even as the box girder), and successful transferring of loads generated by the bell tower to the foundation.

Given that neither report is meant to act as construction drawings, further conclusions on the THP report is not possible at this time.

As a reminder, the structural issues of the bell tower have resulted in orders that require this issue to be addressed in short order. The longer the condition remains the longer the risk to the community and liability to the property owner exists.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with further questions.

Sincerely,

Art Dahlberg,  
Director of Buildings & Inspections