Episcopal Parish Network
Where the Church Gathers

Summary and Transcript
Maintenance as Ministry:
The Strategic Case for Preventive Facility Care
Originally presented November 18, 2025

Summary

The webinar, featuring Nathan Parr from Smart Church Solutions, focused on facility stewardship and maintenance for churches. Nathan discussed the theological foundation of stewardship, the importance of proactive maintenance, and practical steps for managing church facilities effectively.

Key takeaways:

- **Theology of stewardship**: Nathan emphasized that facility stewardship is rooted in scripture, citing examples from Exodus, Leviticus, and Chronicles. Caring for church facilities is an act of worship and a reflection of respect for what God has entrusted to the congregation.
- **Proactive vs. reactive maintenance**: Most churches operate reactively, addressing crises as they occur. Nathan advocated for a proactive approach—planning maintenance and budgeting predictably to avoid emergencies and burnout among staff and contractors.
- **The "Big Three" maintenance priorities**: HVAC systems, roofing, and parking lots are the most critical and costly areas. Regular inspections, filter changes, coil cleaning, roof checks (using drones if necessary), and crack repairs in parking lots can extend the life of these assets and reduce long-term costs.
- **Preventative maintenance benefits**: Deferred maintenance costs compound 7–15% annually. Every dollar spent on preventative maintenance can save $4–$5

in emergency repairs. Regular inspections, cleaning, and upkeep of plumbing, windows, doors, and custodial equipment are essential.
- **Use of technology and planning tools**: Implementing a Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) helps track work orders, schedule preventative maintenance, and manage assets efficiently. Churches should also develop long-term capital reserve plans (3–15 years) to prepare for major replacements.
- **Cultural and leadership shift**: Facility stewardship requires a cultural change within church leadership—acknowledging the real condition of facilities, prioritizing maintenance in budgets, and viewing the building as a ministry tool that communicates care, readiness, and love of neighbor.

Transcript

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Welcome, everybody. My name is Jim Lamm. I'm the parish administrator at Saint David's Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

It's right behind me. And I'd like to welcome you all to the session on facilities and facilities management and upkeep. Our speaker today is Nathan Parr. He is from Smart Church Solutions. You may know that company if you have eSpace or similar products.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

They're the company that does that, and it's great to have him. And he's a fountain of knowledge, so I'm just gonna turn over to him. If you have any questions or comments, please put them in the chat. We'll be monitoring that throughout the webinar. So feel free to put any comments, suggestions, questions, anything else that you'd like to put in, your lunch order, whatever.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

So, Nathan, go ahead and take it away.

Nathan Parr

Alright. Well, again, thank you all for being here on this webinar. A little bit about me. I've been with Smart Church Solutions now for eight years. I'm one of the longest tenured employees at this point.

Nathan Parr

And Smart Church Solutions, you might have heard of us before as Cool Solutions Group or eSpace. But my role at Smart Church Solutions is a facility stewardship specialist. That's a really fancy title of I go around across the country, working with churches and organizations, schools to help them understand the current condition of their facilities, areas that they are lagging in maintenance and or funding, or even staffing, and help them understand where they're at, you know, now and for the next fifteen years where they might go, especially if they choose not to do, anything to address some of those maintenance issues. Personally, in the last eight years, I have assessed over eight and a half million square feet of churches and schools, 27 different states. My oldest facility that I evaluated was originally built in the mid or late seventeen hundreds, 1786 or something like that, and on up to some newer buildings.

Nathan Parr

So I've had the opportunity to see a lot of things, a lot of size and scope of organizations, of conditions, things like that. And out of all those organizations, I've had one facility, and it wasn't the biggest, it wasn't the smallest, that came close to the minimum recommended level of staffing and funding for facility maintenance. So it's an ongoing problem that we see in the church community is that we have an

opportunity. We have an opportunity to do better. So this webinar, I'm not gonna have a PowerPoint now.

Nathan Parr

After this, I will take together my talking points and create a handout that you're welcome to have and use that'll share these talking points with you. But the goal is for you to ask any questions you might wanna ask, to have a conversation. I've got kinda some areas I wanna go to, and, but we'll go from there. Okay? And so what I wanna start out, just kinda the overall understanding is you're building.

Nathan Parr

It is a ministry multiplier, but the opposite is also true. Now I will blunder through the math analogy and drive my wife crazy because she has a degree in math. But the billing can be a ministry multiplier, or it will be a ministry divider. It will lessen your impact, or your ability to do things when we have to divert funds, divert time, divert effort to take care of things that have gone catastrophically bad versus things that could have been maintained and not have that happen. So I hope that makes sense.

Nathan Parr

And so a quick question. If y'all feel comfortable, throw it in the chat. How many of you experience your building interrupting your ministry, some part of your building, interrupting your ministry during the week? Does anybody have that happen? And I'm gonna expand, the chat so I can see.

Nathan Parr

Or maybe if you want to raise your hand if you have that issue. I'm gonna say and I'm gonna go out on a limb and say most of you have, at some point, had a part of your facility that has interrupted your ministry or your ministerial plans. For example, you

go into service, and if you're in a hot climate, the air conditioner has gone bad. Or if you're in a cold climate, the heater is not working the way it should, or the snow removal was not done. The plumbing line broke and nobody noticed until you got into the building there, or as simple as it smells bad.

Nathan Parr

It doesn't smell good. You know, those are all things that can do it, and a lot of that falls under your facility stewardship plan and what you've done. So stewardship, as we consider this, I kinda wanna help shift our focus is it's not just the money. It's not just the stuff. It is really about protecting what has been entrusted to us by the Lord and and what we've been told to maintain.

Nathan Parr

Facilities in general, they're entrusted resources. They're intended to support the mission. Right? Whatever your mission is, your facility should hopefully support it. Unfortunately, what we see a lot is buildings built to support the mission, but because they're not maintained, because that's, they are not updated and fixed when they should, the building then morphs into something that defines the mission because you can't move.

Nathan Parr

You can't do something different because it's too expensive or your building isn't able to flex like it needs to. And so when we consider that, again, that's hopefully putting us into this mindset of the theology of stewardship. So theology, I don't use that term lightly. Everything in this world is founded on something. Right?

Nathan Parr

And if we look and it's just gonna be brief. And, again, you'll have these verses. I'm gonna go through some quick verses, about stewardship and specifically many times facility stewardship that we find actually in the bible today. So if we wanna consider, say, daily and weekly maintenance, you know, is it important? Well, in Exodus twenty seven twenty twenty one, the priest had to tend to the lampstand daily, so there was daily maintenance that had to be done.

Nathan Parr

Exodus 37:8, that's where they're handling the incense and the lamp maintenance. Leviticus instructs them to replace the bread of the presents every Sabbath. In addition to that, because facility teams and facility maintenance is not just one one focus. Right? Numbers 18, the priests are keeping guard over the sanctuary.

Nathan Parr

In Numbers 3, the Levites handled logistics and furnishings and taking care of those. Excuse me. First Chronicles 23, they're cleaning the court's chambers and the holy things. Priests were also called many, obviously, to interpret God's will and guide the people. But then we also look at kind of the early priests and their job where it specifically intersects with facility stewardship is stewardship of sacred space and resources, specifically second Chronicles.

Nathan Parr

Talks about the oversight of the tabernacle and its systems. In Numbers 18, it talks about guarding the sacred furnishings. So from trimming the lamps and replacing the bread of the presents, to guarding the entrances and and all the prepared spaces and making sure they're in the best condition possible. That's showing us even at the beginning that faithful worship has always included faithful stewardship. Right?

Nathan Parr

So stewardship is actually part of worship. That's the point I would make. And how we tend to care for these spaces has and can shape how people experience their first or initial interaction with their savior. It can also inadvertently communicate how we present our feelings or how we might feel toward our community and our lord. And let me say something about that.

Nathan Parr

When we say it that way, some people would kinda push back, and that's okay. But many times when I'm doing an assessment, when I get pushback from staff about, oh, this is important, why are we doing this? This seems like a lot of money. Why do we have to focus on that? What I typically do is go find or pull up one of the pictures I've taken of a damaged space, of a space that's obviously been deteriorating over time.

Nathan Parr

It wasn't just a pop up deal. And I ask them, does this picture accurately reflect how they feel about what God has given them, about the value of what God has provided? And so when you ask it that way, many times, people start to understand. Again, it's not about what it is. It doesn't have to be the biggest fanciest because that's not what it's about.

Nathan Parr

It's about are we taking care of what he entrusted us? He may entrust a little to us. He may entrust a lot to us. Right? And so but regardless, he's gotta do, that.

Nathan Parr

Or I'm sorry. Regardless, it it it's important. Does that make sense? Hope so. I don't know if anybody has any questions yet.

Nathan Parr

Not really seeing the chat on my end, but that's okay. So when it comes to facility source

Jim Lamm (EPN)

No questions yet, Nathan. I'm keeping an eye on it.

Nathan Parr

Awesome. Thank you so much. Y'all feel free to interrupt if you want to. I'm okay with that. But, again, so when we look at that theology and and come to the end of this little section, when we think of the theology of stewardship, it's rooted in scripture.

Nathan Parr

It's a direct, you know, item given to us by the Lord. We see it even in Genesis to maintain to to steward what he has provided. Creation care, I know that's a big deal, and it should be. It's an important thing as we look for going to you know, reducing our carbon footprint, reducing this. And it's to me, it's not a political or a social issue.

Nathan Parr

It's an adherence to scripture issue. It's not none of its ours. None of it's mine. So when it's provided to me, I need to treat it appropriately, and treat it the way that I would show be showing respect to that, the creator. And so we're either gonna do it or or we're not.

Nathan Parr

And the mandate is in scripture. It's our decision whether or not we're gonna follow it. But I will say kinda as we tie this up, cleanliness, in the facility communicates care. Functionality communicates readiness, and safety communicates love of neighbor. And while poor communication or poor cleanliness communicates a lack of care, poor functionality communicates a lack of readiness, and poor safety communicates a lack of love of neighbor.

Nathan Parr

So if god trusts us with a building, he expects us to steward it intentionally and consistently. Right? It's not a one time deal. So that's kind of the just kind of the theology part. And, again, I wanted to set it on that foundation because what better foundation for anything that we're talking about here in the church community than scripture?

Nathan Parr

And, again, so these aren't ideas that we have come up with and decided that has been a good idea. These are things that are given to us. So what does that mean then, and where does it go when it comes to leadership? Those that are facility stewards, you're leading in the thing. And this is paid staff.

Nathan Parr

This is volunteer staff. This is everything in between. Maybe you're actually, you know, an outside contractor even. To that, as a little aside, some of my best maintained parishes for a large project we did for the Episcopal the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, I had to make sure I said it right, were all volunteer teams. And those individuals just were so committed to their parish that with very little money, very little time, everything was really taken care of well.

Nathan Parr

What we're fighting, though, and what they had versus what a lot of things, they were very proactive, right, in their facility stewardship versus reactive. And, unfortunately, the majority of churches today tend to be reactive in their facility stewardship and how they approach it versus proactive. And so the reactive reality that many of you find and tell me if this is, or consider is this, what kinda how you operate, crisis driven repairs. Meaning, it broke in a major way, and now we have to fix it, and we have to pay extra because it has to be expedited because we have to come in on a weekend or we have to do things that up the price. And many times that means then if we're reactive, our budgets tend to be dominated by emergencies.

Nathan Parr

We're not planning ahead and trying to get the best deal. We're trying to make sure we have enough money set aside or at least could move it from somewhere to cover something that we know is gonna happen, but we're not sure what. And this leads to a great deal of burnout, not just staff and your volunteers that get burned out, but if you're constantly reaching out to your contractors, to your service providers, and everything that and anytime that you talk to them, it's an emergency and it's under stress and it's under that. There's real burnout that occurs from those contractors and from the contractor side as well, and that can lead to less than ideal situations. But a more proactive approach, and what I'm hoping that you'll consider adopting and move towards is planning ahead instead of scrambling and and basing budgets, basing operations on predictability instead of the panic that comes in when when something breaks.

Nathan Parr

And it gives you some more freedom than if you can do this to handle those true emergencies rather than the created emergencies because of lack of facility stewardship. And, if you don't schedule your maintenance, your building will schedule it for you, and it never picks a good time. That's just kind of a little truism there. But it's the mindset. So these first couple sections we're talking about it, I'm really wanting to address the culture, or at least bring that out.

Nathan Parr

Many times we say we want the best thing for our building or we want to have a nice building, yet our budgets, our staffing levels, and our planning does not reflect that. It's not a priority because it's not as much time as spent on there. The budgets don't reflect that, or in the capital reserve planning, which hopefully you are, but setting aside those monies so that when items that you have installed need to be replaced, there's cash to pay for the replacement rather than having to quickly take out a loan or pull from this ministry emphasis or or do that. So that's kind of the foundation and the culture that I really am hoping that you'll honestly assess. Again, in the eight years and and before I was consulting for eight years, I spent twelve and a half years at a large church dealing with this, where, you know, 10 acres and and had a private school that met during there during the week, had a a licensed childcare facility that met weekly, supported several mission churches, had seven different out properties and all sorts of stuff.

Nathan Parr

And I experienced it. I lived that where we weren't budgeting correctly. We weren't budgeting realistically, you know, for the amount of deferred maintenance we had versus what was coming due. And a few times, it just really, really hurt. And what I found is it was much harder to change the culture and the and the thinking behind stewardship than it was to actually find money sometimes because it it takes an acknowledgment that I may have to put off something if I'm going to steward well because I need to invest it here or I need to replace something here before I do the the neat, cool thing.

Nathan Parr

I need to fix the thing that that actually is affecting and has the potential to affect everything. And so what are some of the real numbers then when we talk about this preventative and having this better mindset of preventative maintenance of stewarding well? In general, from a fact and figure standpoint, deferred maintenance

compounds about seven to 15% annually. So the cost of what it's doing, you know, it's not just compounding over the initial cost of that repair. It's compounding over the cost of the additional needs as that equipment starts to fail more, as more things start to break.

Nathan Parr

So a seven to 15% annual compounding, and every dollar in preventative maintenance spent can sometimes prevent 4 to $5 in emergency expenses, which means the opposite corollary is also kinda true. For every dollar not spent in preventative maintenance, it's gonna cost you 4 to $5 more when it comes due. And not having a predictability in how to handle it, it's a direct reflection of a lack of consistent leadership and a lack of proper budgeting. Right? Because these numbers, they're all I'm I don't think anybody here on this call would would say that they've experienced a decrease in their annual operating expenses.

Nathan Parr

Utility companies typically don't, you know, lower their prices. You're not getting you're not paying less for the coffee. You're not paying less for your tables and chairs. You're not paying less for HVAC equipment, roofing, things like that. And so because of that, this compounding and this money, that's where these numbers come from.

Nathan Parr

It's taking from a real world real world realistic look. And as churches, what we saw last year, some this year and and last year, was a lot of churches were starting to get, were having trouble finding insurance because they're they because of the major storms, there were some major payouts, obviously. Insurance had to pay out quite a bit. Well, what they can't always determine is, was the damage strictly from the storm, or was it because you weren't maintaining your facility and it got damaged worse because of the storm? Well, insurance companies aren't in the game of losing money,

and so they were starting to put riders out there, and saying, we'll insure everything except the roof.

Nathan Parr

We'll ensure everything except this. And those are big ticket items. And if you're not putting money aside, if you're not doing your inspections and things like that, it's really gonna hurt, in the long term. And so again, those numbers that we talk about just keep going up. So what are some practical steps?

Nathan Parr

Right? Like, I'm talking about these numbers. Let me share some of the commonly missed preventative maintenance items that I have seen over the last eight years and actually missed myself for several years as I was learning how to be an operations director, when it comes to that. So first thing, we talk in Smart Church quite a bit about the big three. What the big three is, it's not cars.

Nathan Parr

Right? It has nothing to do with cars. It has everything to do with HVAC, parking lots, and roofing. Because those three items tend to last the longest, they tend to be the most expensive to replace, and there will, if they fail any one of those three areas, you can actually experience a loss of attendance or or missed opportunities because you can't be there. So that's the big three.

Nathan Parr

So what can we do to help extend the life and extend the operational lower the operational cost and extend the life of those kinda big three. Well, on HVAC and I'm gonna pause right here. I just saw Mike ask the question. You will receive a I'm gonna

take all of these things that I have, and I will send this out to the network so that they can distribute it to everybody. So you will have that and the recording.

Nathan Parr

So we'll do that. So, commonly, starting with HVAC because that's one of the most easy things to get money for because nobody likes to be uncomfortable in church. I mean, let's just be honest. We get upset. So regular filter changes.

Nathan Parr

That's one of the easiest things to do to help extend the life of your unit. Now when you're doing a filter change, I would encourage you on a couple things. One, make sure the date is written on the filter. If you're having a company do it, make sure they write the date of the change on the filter. And if you have somebody doing it, a company, you need to go back a week later and spot check to make sure all of the units that they actually have been changed and that that filter is changed.

Nathan Parr

When you're replacing the filters, if you're doing it in house or you ask the company that's doing it, ask them, is there water in the pan, in the in the overflow pan? Does the unit sound okay when you turn it off? Is there, you know, rust forming, or is there water coming down? Ask those questions. Take a look at it.

Nathan Parr

I used to actually change my filters monthly, which drove a lot of FMs, facility managers, operations directors crazy because they're like, why would you do that? Just get a pleated filter. You don't have to change them as often. And I agree that that's true. But by changing my filters monthly, I guaranteed that I looked or someone

on my team looked at every piece of equipment on the inside of the building once a month.

Nathan Parr

And so we were able to see things and catch them sooner rather than later By and and that's just how we operated, and we were able to determine a couple units needed filter changes. One unit needed a filter change every week because of where it was located as churches tend to build buildings, and then they slap buildings together, and it's like adding three or four different Lego sets together. It sort of fits, but not quite. This particular unit, because of how all the buildings had built down, it was a vortex for all of the dirt and debris that was blowing through the building. So that filter in that unit needed to be changed weekly.

Nathan Parr

And we wouldn't have known that if we weren't looking at it every week. Having them inspected, your HVAC inspected every year, it's a cost. It's an expense. Absolutely. But preventative maintenance is what we're talking about.

Nathan Parr

That's what extends the service life. That's what extends and lowers the operational cost. Let them look. Annual or semiannual coil cleaning on both the interior and exterior. You know, don't forget the interior coils.

Nathan Parr

As we clean that dirt and debris, it allows them to remain efficient. And a very, very simple one is check your outside units. If you've got heat pumps, direct exchange, rooftop units, it doesn't matter. Anywhere, check the piping. The average unprotected

pipe insulation, depending on where you're in Texas, it might last you maybe fifteen months.

Nathan Parr

Some other places longer, some other places less. But when that piping that's supposed to be insulated is no longer insulated because the insulation has completely deteriorated and fall off, that's waste. And that literally is, you know, a dollar's worth of material and 5 minutes of time to increase the efficiency of the unit and to not have waste for that piping going in and out. So those are opportunities, and probably 95% of the properties that I have assessed have the majority of their insulation on the pipes on the outside missing or damaged. So it's a low hanging fruit that can make a difference.

Nathan Parr

Then when we go to roofs, getting your roof inspected, and I know this is sort of a specialty area. If you're not a roofer or you don't know how to, don't walk on your roofs. Okay? Let's be safe. And some of you, I inspected one that was an original slate roof that was, like, on a twelve twelve pitch.

Nathan Parr

You wouldn't catch me walking that roof for nothing. And but somebody can somebody somebody can inspect it. And with today's technology, drones can be used to actually get up and get a much better picture of your roof, your roof light. Depending on the cameras on the drones or the opportunities in the area, you might even be able to get a infrared zone drone view of your roof and see where you've got hot spots or cold spots on that roof. But get it inspected.

Nathan Parr

It's one of your most costly investments. And so damage and failure in that roof can have a much bigger impact on the interior. Right? Indoor air quality and stuff like that. We don't like to use, you know, in our reports, we never say the m-word, the four letter m-word when when there's water and stuff and things growing on surfaces, we we just say there is mildew or organic growth.

Nathan Parr

Right? But, sometimes we see black in organs, you know, organic growth on there. So, you know, the different types of stuff that can grow, and a lot of times that grows because we haven't done our maintenance. We haven't caught a leak. We haven't noticed it.

Nathan Parr

So that can impact your indoor environmental quality. So we need to be cognizant of that. But, again, a drone view, if you've got a super high steep roof, if you've got a normal roof or a flat roof, have a roofer up there to inspect it and show you all the areas, teach you about it if you don't know about roofs. I I installed commercial roofs for a while. So I have a pretty good working knowledge, but I'm still learning as I meet contractors each time I'm out there and talking with folks.

Nathan Parr

It's that you never stop learning. You can't in facility management because everything's improving. But while you're doing that roof inspection, that's also a good time to check out your gutters because, again, it's about taking that water and getting it away from the building. And so a lot of times, you'll see. You'll look up at your building where your gutter, if it's not a continuous gutter, where the joints are, is is there organic staining down your, facade?

Nathan Parr

You know? Because it's leaking there, and it's a constant leak. Your downspouts, are they connected? I see lots of downspouts that aren't connected. I see downspouts that the mowers have helped us by running into them and reducing their outflow capacity by 50%.

Nathan Parr

Well, that causes additional problems. If you have underground drainage, when's the last time you had that looked at? Maybe even a camera run down to it because if it fails somewhere along the line, which they always do it seems, then that can cause backup. That way they can back up all the way into the building. It can really mess up your grounds, all sorts of things.

Nathan Parr

Right? And so inspect those gutters and those drainage, and then evaluate the drainage not only on the roof, but around the building. You know, a $10 gutter extension can push the water, you know, five, six feet past, so that it doesn't sit against your foundation. Adding an additional downspout can reduce the outflow pressure on two of your downspouts and keep it so the water doesn't just flip, you know, flow over the top. Adding in gutter screens.

Nathan Parr

If you have a lot of trees, you know, these are things that if you don't do that, it's gonna it messes your drainage. And so we need to look at that because a clogged gutter also causes issues and and and a few other things. And then finally, on the big three, parking lots. This is one of my things. I really like parking lots. I'm a weird guy that way, but I do like parking lots.

Nathan Parr

They fascinate me. But when you're looking at your parking lot, repair the cracks if they're asphalt or concrete. Repair the cracks as soon as they're seen. It's not that difficult to get asphalt to get a pourable crack filler. And it may not look the prettiest if you do it yourself, if you don't, you know, grade it right or squeegee it correctly, but I'd rather have an ugly sealed crack than an unsealed crack that gets way worse.

Nathan Parr

Because with asphalt and concrete and everything, you've got the surface damage, but what we're really worried about is the substrate damage. Because once that substrate gets damaged, there is no just put a patch on top. It's cut the whole thing out, repair the foundation, then patch the concrete. And so the cost to have a reseal done versus a mill and repave or versus, you know, cutting out patches in a concrete lot versus having to redo the whole lot, you know, we're talking a significant amount of dollars, per square foot. And so check those parking lots.

Nathan Parr

Check that. And that's also when I say check your drainage too, that's also something that we've done on the parking lots. Is it still draining correctly? Was it graded correctly? Check to see.

Nathan Parr

Maybe you have the minimum requirement for asphalt, or maybe like me on my, one of my parking lots at the church I was at that had, half, 50% of what it should have had for the total thickness of the asphalt when they're there. You know? No wonder I was getting, a little more damage than some other places. But because I saw that, because I found the thickness, I was able to then increase my preventative maintenance activities in that particular area. But if you're not doing it, you'll never know that.

Nathan Parr

So that's the big three. Those are simple things that should be done regardless. Continuing on, though, some other things that I have seen cause issues that I would say probably something you might wanna do sooner rather than later is plumbing inspections. One of the big things is to consider your water cutoffs. Do you know, on the far extreme, do you know where your water cutoffs are for your building?

Nathan Parr

If you had a major major issue, could you cut the water off to the building or your sprinkler system, so on and so forth? But also exercising and understanding your water cutoffs at the sinks and at the water fountains and things like that. Old school valves, turn valves, have a rubber washer in there. Well, that rubber deteriorates. If you've got hard water, it deteriorated, like, a week after you installed it.

Nathan Parr

It's just not good. Quarter turn valves are great. You know, it's a physical thing. But even if you do have hard water, you can get grit and debris that will keep it from not being able to close fully. Exercising them once a year, twice a year.

Nathan Parr

Do it at time change. Right? We used to schedule a lot of things at time change because everybody knew time change, and I just knew when I do it. But exercise those water cutoffs. Make sure you're getting the required inspections done.

Nathan Parr

Backflow inspections. If you have a sprinkler system, you have a backflow. You should have a backflow if you have a lawn irrigation system. If you have any type of chilled

water or piping system, boilers, things like that, you should probably have a backflow. Those need inspected, and those need inspected annually.

Nathan Parr

Drain maintenance. Do your drains work? Are they flowing especially in your mechanical rooms, things like that, which also means you have to keep your mechanical rooms clean. So if there was a problem, you could actually have the water out. And then exterior faucets test and inspect those.

Nathan Parr

Not only for functionality, do they work, but can you turn them off? A lot of times you'll see, on buildings, a nice green, drip mark below an exterior water faucet because there's a slight drip there, and it's got a little copper in it, and it stains the facade. But a little maintenance goes a long way. During window maintenance is something Tim used to always talk about, still talks about the, you know, the cost of spending $45 on a tube of caulk and recaulking all your windows once a year versus not doing anything and having to replace all the windows at year ten. These were should have been twenty, twenty five year windows, but at year ten, they're all rotted out because of the $4 of caulk that would've cost you over those ten years, you know, a couple grand versus now with modern some of the modern windows and some of the areas that you find yourselves where you have to match or a historic area, and now you're paying tens of thousands of dollars.

Nathan Parr

So door and window maintenance. And door maintenance is opening the doors, lubricating the closers, hinges, things like that, looking for rust, all of those things, making sure they're adjusted correctly. Because once a door gets out of adjustment, it's kinda like us. You know, when your back is out of adjustment or you're out of adjustment, it starts to hurt more and more, and you don't work as well. Same thing with our doors and our windows.

Nathan Parr

Entrance matting, that's one of the big things, when we talk about preventative maintenance and facility stewardship. If I can, if I with proper matting, I can reduce by up to 60% the amount of dirt and debris brought into my building. That means I'm not spending as much cleaning. I'm not spending as much chemicals out there. My indoor environmental quality is better.

Nathan Parr

I'm not getting as much dirt and debris into the HVAC. My computer and Worship AV systems are not getting as much debris into them. So thereby maintaining our matting, it has a positive effect for all these other building systems. Okay? And then the last thing I just wanted to talk about with things that I see missed a lot is custodial equipment.

Nathan Parr

It's cleaning your building, but are you taking care of the equipment that you expect to provide the safe space for and and churches serve the two most at risk demographics, the very young and the very old when it comes to being susceptible to catching things. Are you maintaining your equipment? It was a blinding flash of the obvious as one of my supervisors used to say when I had somebody tell me, it's neat. You know, you wear gloves, we clean, and we do everything. But as soon as we're done with that, we just take the gloves off and throw them in the trash can, but everything that we've touched with those gloves on our cleaning cart is dirty.

Nathan Parr

And now I'm putting my hands on that. So, actually, cleaning the equipment, doing the PMs on the vacuums, on your auto scrubbers, all of those things, any any equipment you have extends the life. And the longer we can have that piece of equipment work

and work correctly, we're saving money. Right? And so as we're coming up towards the end here, preventative maintenance, it really is kind of ministry care.

Nathan Parr

Right? It's reducing the risk, and mitigating the risk potentially for not only you as a staff member, but also all those guests, all the community that we're inviting in. We're saying we care for you because we're gonna provide the best environment we can. If we invite you into our house, it's gonna be the best we can do. Notice I didn't say it's gonna be the fanciest and or it's gonna be gilded or anything like that.

Nathan Parr

I simply said, we're gonna provide the best and safest space for you as you come in. Reliable spaces, consistent condition, that enhances the worship learning and community life because it doesn't become a distraction to any of that. And it's a ministry multiplier. When we are actually consistent in our facility stewardship, we're able to do more as a ministry, again, because we're not having to react to those major things. If you haven't and I would be bereft if I didn't say, we're talking about preventative maintenance.

Nathan Parr

Well, how do you manage it? Because I can't remember everything. I don't even remember what I had for breakfast yesterday half the time. So how do we remember all of this when you consider this complex commercial space that you have to maintain? And if you're in an older parish that has, older masonry or fancy windows or, you know, all of these things that are specialty, versus even a big box store that you've converted, it all has this running thing.

Nathan Parr

Well, we encourage you to consider a computerized maintenance management system. You'll hear that talked about quite a bit, CMMS. How you track your maintenance. It's how you input your work orders. It's how you find that historical data.

Nathan Parr

It's how you develop the metrics to understand what you need to do at in the facility. And a CMMS is getting to the point where, with some exceptions, it's really needed in most any organization. For my pastoral pastors, pastoral staff, you know, it helps us understand and present back to our members that facility stewardship is important, and this is how we're measuring it, and this keeps it visible. It helps us budget better. I'd rather not just increase my budget for maintenance by 15%.

Nathan Parr

I'd rather say, I want to replace this, this, and this, and this project needs to happen. This is what it's gonna cost. And that provides additional clarity and accountability. These funds that are coming in, you know, we can't just up the price of a widget to maintain our facility better. We can't charge more as a community cost.

Nathan Parr

You know? Oh, you're coming in. There's a community fee. Thanks for coming. We can't do that, but we can do better with, being more intentional tracking it, which then lets people know that we are being the best stewards of your money as we are being the best stewards of our facility.

Nathan Parr

And for the teams, it allows you to centralize those work orders, create those PM schedules. Again, you have so much coming at you. Let a system do it. Track your

assets, get automated reminders, again, the logs, the historical framework. And that's a tool that helps you move from reactive to preventative in that mindset.

Nathan Parr

Does everybody have to have one? Absolutely not. But you you need to do something. And if you're not doing something you know, Post it notes worked at one point. It's not as good now.

Nathan Parr

And so four steps to take before we get closed here. Number one, assess reality. We spend too much time and I'm making a very general statement, but churches today spend too much time ignoring reality when it comes to the condition of their facility. Walk it. Look at those issues.

Nathan Parr

Prioritize the risk, but walk it with eyes wide open. Understand. When I do my assessment, I used to feel bad, because I was like, they're gonna be they're not gonna like me when I point out everything that I found. Now I rejoice that I now get paid to say everything I wish I could have said when I was an operations director. But it's reality.

Nathan Parr

And it's to me, it's not so much, are you gonna do what I say or not? It's that you can't now have the excuse of we didn't know. So we wanna get away we don't operate that way with pretty much anything else in our life. So let's be realistic with this. Build a rhythm.

Nathan Parr

Start with something, a twelve month PM rhythm. So think ahead. Okay. This is something I need to do every year. Great.

Nathan Parr

Identify those things. And then ask yourself, okay. What needs to happen every other month? What needs to happen twice a year? What needs to happen monthly?

Nathan Parr

Start with one and then start filling that in. Track everything. That data is what you need to make those informed decisions. And then consider three to five years minimum, you know, thinking ahead. We typically use a fifteen year outlook because fifteen years is kind of the average service life for commercial HVAC in a church.

Nathan Parr

So imagine year zero, you replace that unit, and you're like, yay. Everything's great. We're saying you better be putting aside money every fifth you know, every year for the next fifteen years because what you just spent $10,000 on today in fifteen years is gonna cost you $18,000. And so you need to put aside the appropriate amount of money so that you can then do that. And, oh, by the way, it may last longer than fifteen years, and it will last longer likely than fifteen years if you perform the preventative maintenance, if you do all of those things.

Nathan Parr

If you can extend the maintenance interval, then, again, that's a great way to be a better budgeter. And just understand your building is preaching to the community long before they walk through those doors. And so what's the message that they're

receiving? So that's walk the building, build a PM, explore some type of maintenance, something, software tracking tool, and be realistic. Be honest.

Nathan Parr

What condition is your building? What is it? Because you're not just maintaining a building. You're stewarding a tool God uses to form disciples and minister to your community. And so the better it's maintained, the better it is.

Nathan Parr

So I thank you for joining with me and putting up with me as I talk. Just kinda go y'all didn't know you're gonna get a little mini sermon, but thank you for being here. And that's what I have. Is there any questions that we need to address?

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Yeah. Any questions from anyone you can put in the chat. I will say too that and I think you touched on this, but it may seem insurmountable from a financial standpoint. But if you start putting away money to do these repairs, it's not it's it doesn't hit all at once. Yep.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

And I also will put a plug in for the EPN conference. It's in March 2026. Early bird pricing is right now through the end of the year, so get on it now. But the first workshop in the property track is about a PPMP, phase preservation master plan, and that goes along with what Nathan was saying of planning out your repairs. And it's something that we did here at Saint David's when we renovated our historic church.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

We have a five phase plan, including every HVAC, fire sprinkler, because some of the building's not fire sprinkler because you didn't have to do it way back when, all those type things. And it has, you know, today's dollars on it because the contractor prices it. And it's a great road map to see now we have the storage done. What's next? And for us, it's health and safety.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

So that's next. Now we have to raise the money. But at least we have a plan, and we have a goal, and we kinda know what the money is gonna cost. So things like that, if you can come to that workshop, it'll be great. It'll be done by the architects that did our plan.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

So encourage you to do that. I host also, mostly every month, we have an administrator's cohort meeting on Zoom. I kinda facilitate that. So we have different guests. This last month, we had an auditor come on and talk about end of year processes and what to do for you know, if you have a even if you don't do an audit, it's good to do for year end closings, things like that.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

We've had a variety of speakers speak. So if you are not on the administrator's mailing list for some reason, please contact Laura Manley @epnepiscopalparishes.org, and she can get you on that list, or you can email me at jim.l@saintdavedave.org. And I'm happy to do that too. Anybody else have any other questions or comments or things that you wanna know about? I'm not very good at quantum physics, so you can't ask me that.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Maybe Nathan might know, but or his wife. She's a mathematician.

Nathan Parr

Yeah. She would. She would know. And I just wanna tie in again what Jim said, going back to our experience with the diocese there in Southern Ohio. One of the churches, one of the priests was over a couple different churches, and that taking it a bite at a time was an excellent way of proper facility stewardship and facility maintenance thinking. He had historic parishes that needed a lot of masonry repair while doing the entire parish is very costly.

Nathan Parr

What he would do he planned it out. It took, like, five years, but he did one side, one section at a time, and it was a five year plan. It was very intentional. You know, started with kind of the most egregious area first and then went around the building. And while it was said and done, I mean, it was beautiful.

Nathan Parr

They had to find a masonry conservationist, but, you know, it was great, but it took five years. Sometimes it's okay to to wait and take your time when it's planned and when it's intentional.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Right. It's fair to do something and take a long time and do nothing, and something catastrophic happens, and it costs you 10 to 100 times more than it would have if you would have just done it right then and there.

Nathan Parr

Yeah.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Mary's asking for your contact information, Nathan.

Nathan Parr

Yep. I am gonna put my email into the chat, nathan@smartchurchsolutions.com. Feel free to reach out if I can do anything. And I would encourage you, we have on our on our Smart Church Solutions website, we have a lot of free resources. We're passionate about church facility stewardship.

Nathan Parr

And so we make it a point to produce as much relevant, actionable items and actionable, you know, resources for you to to help you and assist you because, you know, you don't know what you don't know. And so smartchurchsolutions.com, I think, slash resources, but we have a lot of free stuff there. We have a link that you could join our private Facebook group, and it's not a sales group. We don't do sales like that. It is designed for church stewards from across the country to communicate together.

Nathan Parr

We just facilitate that, and it's great. And it's awesome because a lot of times we get people talking, and then I'm learning things. And then I'm able to take what I've learned from this group and share it with somebody I'm working with over here. So I happen to be in Virginia right now working with one of these churches, and I remember fondly, and this will be my last thing. It's just a fun story.

Nathan Parr

But I went to a church, and they had gotten rid of the water fountains, just had bottle fill stations. And I said, well, what happens, you know, if someone doesn't have a bottle? And they said, well, that's why we have those, and it was a cone cup dispenser. So they could pull a cone cup and get water. And I was like, why cone cups?

Nathan Parr

Because I don't like cone cups. And she said, simple. People can't set a half full cone cup full of water down because it won't sit there. So they all go in the trash. Yeah.

Nathan Parr

I was like, I had never thought of that. Yeah. But what a way to facilitate stewardship as well as help keep the building clean, you know, help the staff there. They had plenty. It was awesome.

Nathan Parr

So almost every time, every report I've done since then, I have a picture of a water fountain saying, I recommend you get rid of this, put a bottle fill, and add a cone cup. Yeah. Because, yeah, it's just so. Yeah, take it one step at a time, figure out what you don't know, and then make a plan. Nobody, nobody solves the issue.

Nathan Parr

Your building didn't get to the condition it's in yet yesterday. You know? It didn't happen overnight. It's not gonna fix it overnight.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Right. Very good. Nathan, thank you so much for your wisdom and your examples and your for being here, taking your time to do this. And, Laura, in the background from Episcopal Parish Network, thank you very much for all you did in getting this all set up. And, look for different things on the web EPN websites.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

The, as Nathan said, he's gonna have the notes up there, things like that. So if you've got any questions, email Nathan, myself, or Laura. And, again, thanks for attending. We'll see you at the next webinar.

Nathan Parr

Alright. Thank you all.