

September 1, 2010

Dear Parishioner,

As many of you already know, we are working on ways to expand our seating capacity and improve other facilities at St. Theresa's. This letter is being sent by the Parish Council to give all parishioners a more complete picture of what we have been doing and where we are going.

Those of us who have been at St. Theresa's Church since Fr. Jim arrived have seen considerable growth in the number of people who attend our church each week. If you attended Mass here this past Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, or Easter, you will remember that the pews were full, all the folding chairs were used, and there was standing room only in the choir loft, the vestibule, and even out the door! We also have a Hispanic Service each Tuesday evening that has grown to almost full capacity.

Although this is a good problem to have, we are concerned about the convenience and safety of everyone who attends our church. The Parish Council has been working with Fr. Jim on these issues for a number of years. Several years ago, we instituted the 6:00 pm Sunday mass as a "temporary experiment" to help relieve the crowding at the morning Masses. That temporary experiment soon became a permanent measure - - and is still not sufficient to keep up with the continued growth.

We also discussed related issues to having a growing church community:

- The Parish Hall will become inadequate to comfortably house large functions.
- The Restroom facilities need to be remodeled and increased for more people.
- The three houses across the street used for PSR education and other purposes need to be improved or replaced.

Options Explored

Various options were considered and researched to solve this problem:

1. Buy land and build a new Church and Parish Hall.
2. Construct a new Church and Hall on the existing property.
3. Expand the current Church and improve the related service facilities.

Option 1 – There is little available land in the immediate area that will accommodate our needs; the price tag for the land alone is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars; and the cost of building a new church is in the 5 to 8 million dollar range. This would place a significant financial burden on our church community for years to come.

Option 2 – Sketches were drawn up with a larger church located where the Parish Hall and Rectory now stand, including a basement level for a new hall, and classrooms for PSR education and meetings. A new Rectory would have to be built with existing land or newly purchased land in the vicinity. This option solves the unavailable and costly land problems. However, possible zoning issues, sewer drain complexities, and the millions of dollars needed to build a new church complex would still be a major stumbling block.

Option 3 - Because of the current economic times, and issues related to land and zoning, we found it prudent to choose this option to expand the existing church and improve the service facilities. There are no land issues with this option, and the cost to expand would be far less than building a new church.

The Plan - St. Theresa Expansion Campaign

This undertaking is composed of several phases - the first to immediately expand the church building. We expect this expansion to solve the overcrowding at Mass for years to come. Expanding and remodeling the restroom facilities are included with this first phase. Later phases include plans to expand or relocate the Parish Hall, Rectory, and classrooms for PSR education.

After sketching several expansion options, we met with a number of architects and contractors to develop the best alternative. Our plan is to expand both sides of the church approximately 12 feet in each direction. This will add over 80% to our current pew seating capacity of 116 people; bringing our total pew seating to about 209. A few of the seats will be partially blocked from the Altar due to a necessary column on each side, but for most masses this will not be a problem. Folding chairs that will increase our seating capacity to over 250 per Mass will still be available for holidays.

We had to obtain a zoning variance from the City of Leeds as the expansion will take us to the property line limits. The variance was granted – thanks in part to dozens of our parishioners who came to the meeting showing their support.

As you can see from the **enclosed illustration**, the existing restroom and Sacristy areas have been combined to allow for additional (ADA compliant) facilities. The Sacristy will be relocated on the opposite side of the Altar where the unused “old kitchen” is located.

There will be two new exits at the front of the church. One will be an “Emergency Only” exit on the Rt. 119 side of the church. The other exit will include a ramp up to the restroom and Parish Hall levels using part of the outside covered walkway.

The project also includes:

- Repairing several roof leaks and damage while completely re-insulating and re-shingling the entire roof.
- Heating and Air Conditioning will be improved resulting in better heating and cooling during Mass.
- The existing stained glass windows will be re-used on the new outer walls after they are cleaned.
- Re-carpet the entire sanctuary, choir loft, and stairs.
- Heat/smoke detectors with pull alarms by each exit fire extinguisher mounts, and emergency lighting to be installed.
- Interior lighting to be improved while keeping with the traditional appearance of the church.
- The addition sections will have the same dark pine wood ceilings.
- The Altar and all walls and columns will be repainted.
- A new sound system is to be installed.
- The walkway area outside the front of the church will be expanded.
- The existing exterior and signage in the front of the church will be power washed.
- Exterior lighting to be improved.

Implementation

In order to tackle this expansion project, we must vacate the church for a period of time. Estimates range from 12 to 16 weeks from the time construction begins until we celebrate our first mass in the expanded facility. The good news is that we expect to be completed before the end of the year - hopefully before the start of Advent season and Christmas.

The pews, Altar, Tabernacle, Lectern, and other necessities will be removed from the church and set up in the Parish Hall where we will celebrate daily and weekly Mass during the construction process. The hall has already been repaired and repainted for this purpose.

We can expect the likely messiness and clutter of construction around the grounds of the church and the street parking areas during the construction process. And since the expansion includes the upgrading and expansion of the restrooms, there will be a period of time that the existing restrooms will be unavailable. Temporary port-a-toilets will be set up near the Parish Hall during this period.

Costs

The cost estimates for the construction and materials, engineering, and architectural designs, is in the **\$400,000** range. Actual costs will depend on specific quotes obtained for each part of the construction project, any unforeseen problems encountered during the process, and any changes to the project that may be made along the way. The Parish Council and Building Committee have worked diligently to anticipate and eliminate any changes before work begins.

Pledge Campaign

St. Theresa's Church needs your financial support on this expansion campaign. The amount of money pledged and received for this campaign will determine to what extent we can transform our church into a facility that we can all be proud of. Pray for wisdom in deciding the amount you are willing to sacrifice, and return your pledge card next week in the regular offering collection. **You do not have to include your donation with the pledge card.**

We understand that the current economic conditions are affecting all parishioners and will do our best to accommodate your needs – including monthly billing over the next 12 months if necessary. The amount you pledge is up to you. Consider the \$400,000 estimated cost and the 230 or so registered families at our church.

All registered parishioners of St. Theresa will be contacted if we have not received their card within a few weeks. So please return all cards, **even if you can not make a pledge at this time.** Our goals for this pledge drive are two-fold. Our first goal is 100% participation by all registered parishioners. Our second goal is to pay for this expansion for you, our growing St. Theresa family. It is for you we wish to succeed in this church expansion and it is through you that we know we can succeed to give honor and glory to God.

Closing Thoughts

We ask for your prayers, patience, and understanding during the inconveniences of the construction process. Offer these sacrifices to God when you feel frustrated with the mess, the cramped conditions, or simply feel like the project will never end!

Illustrations of how the church will look when completed will be posted in the vestibule of the church and in the Parish Hall. We will also have them on the church's web site.

If you have any comments or suggestions on the expansion campaign, please contact Fr. Jim or one of the Parish Council members.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration and for quickly returning your pledge cards. We will keep everyone informed of the pledge results and progress on the construction project on a timely basis.

The Parish Council

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