

New Church Offices

Please read the whole article before making any assumptions or conclusions. – Fr. Pat

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the houses that the parish owns. I would like to return to the subject now as we look closer at the Advancing the Journey project.

Back in May, after the announcement that I was to be the new pastor, I was urgently invited to come and look at the houses to pick one to be the rectory. The other one was to become temporary offices. I am very happy in the rectory now. At that time, the end of May, I was still expecting the basement renovations would begin in July and that the offices would already be established, temporarily, in 185 Toronto Rd., by the time I arrived. Subsequently, as you know, the project was postponed.

I must tell you, I am glad that it was **To explain, let me begin with a little history.** In the original exploratory studies done by the Advancing the Journey Committee, three needs/goals were identified; a parish hall, renovation of the church basement, and new offices. When the fundraising consulting firm estimated that a capital fund drive could potentially raise \$2.5 million in pledges, the parish understood it had to prioritize these goals. It was decided to concentrate on the renovation and the offices. Although the goal of the campaign was \$2,500,000, the pledges actually totaled \$1,200,000. Most of that amount has been received, either through pledges fulfilled or through other donations. So we are very close to having the funds for both goals. Therefore, I suggest that we look at the basement renovation and the building of new parish offices as a single project.

However, what I have come to realize is that there is no specific plan or timeline for the building of the new church offices.

The Building Committee of the Advancing the Journey Initiative did, in fact, offer multiple options on the building and where to place it. They estimated costs. However **no specific plan was allowed to be decided on such issues as**

- where the office building would go;
- on an actual floor plan;
- on costs based on actual bids;
- or on a timeline for completion of the office building.

Until we get this new and needed information, we run the risk of beginning a project before we know how it ends; of having a “temporary” set of inadequate parish offices for several years. I do not want to let that happen.

Therefore, with the support of Parish Council and the Building Committee of the Advancing the Journey Initiative, **we are proposing to NOT proceed with the basement renovation until we have some clear information and decisions on these points involving the office building.**

With that said, I think the plans for renovation of the basement for our religious education programs are excellent and needed. I am eager for the work to be done, but I think that these other questions need to be answered quickly. Therefore, we have begun conversations with the architects who designed the basement renovations. We are asking for a design and floorplans based on the projected staffing needs of the parish for the next five to ten years. We will propose the best site on the property on which to place the offices. We will propose what the building should look like. We will know what the project will cost. We may even find that there is the possibility of asking the question of which of the two components should start first.

This much is absolutely set in my mind. If we take the time to answer these questions about the needed office building, it is only so that **the whole project WILL INDEED GO FORWARD** without a hitch and without further delay. Combining the two projects into one could possibly save us money and could condense the overall timeline, although we won't know this for sure until we have the complete plans.

This is an exciting time for me, and I trust for the whole parish. I do not cherish a building program simply for the pleasure of building something. I truly believe that we as a parish will be inspired by new energy and enthusiasm when this single project is accomplished. I hope we will see even greater generosity and contributions so that we will quickly and confidently reach all our goals. I know you will join me in this enthusiasm.