

St. Augustine Parish New Church

March 20, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I'm reaching out to you today with a heart full of hope and faith. We are on the brink of realizing a dream we've nurtured in our hearts for over 20 years - the construction of our new church and hall. This is not a small undertaking, and there may be challenges along the way, but I have no doubt that we can bring this dream to life together.

Recent Discussions with Parishioners on Building a new church.

In January, we gathered to discuss the preliminary budget estimates for our new church and hall. Based on design proposals from three contractors, these estimates painted a picture of a new church and hall that could comfortably serve 250 and 200 individuals, respectively. The estimated cost, ranging from \$4 to \$4.5 Million, may seem substantial, but it represents our shared vision and ambition.

However, we must balance our dreams with the reality of our current financial situation.

Fundraising efforts and generous contributions from our parish community have enabled us to accumulate an annual total of \$190,000. With these resources, we could sustain a \$1.5 to \$2 Million mortgage. However, we must acknowledge the shortfall of \$50,000 per year towards our mortgage.

Many of you expressed concerns about the cost and design process during our discussions. Your feedback has been incredibly insightful and has highlighted the need for an inclusive design

process, guided by a professional architect. It also underlined the importance of visualizing our project before committing financial resources, and the need to establish a clear budget.

I assure you that your concerns have been heard, and they are invaluable in shaping our path forward. As we move forward, we commit to a design process that values your input and encourages collective participation. We promise to provide clarity at every step, ensuring you fully understand what you're contributing to. We will work together to establish a budget that aligns with our means and shared vision.

Establishing a Budget

As we momentarily shift our focus from the design process, it's important to delve into the financial aspect of our project. The foundation of our new church and hall heavily relies on a budget that our community can support wholeheartedly. We must build a place of worship that resonates with our faith and is within our means.

We've been blessed with the Stampede food booth's assistance, a testament to a few tireless parishioners' dedication and hard work. But we are also aware that filling the required spots can sometimes be challenging, and external circumstances, like the recent COVID situation, can disrupt such projects. Therefore, we should be prepared to fund this sacred project primarily from our resources, treating any additional income from fundraising events as a welcome supplement to our parish.

Considering this, we need to ask ourselves an important question: "What am I willing to give to support building our new church and hall?" This simple question holds profound significance, as the answer stems from a deep reflection of our commitment to St. Augustine Parish.

We've been fortunate to enjoy our current church, fully paid for over 70 years ago. The decision to build back then was significant, mirroring the gravity of our current endeavour. Indeed, the cost was less in 1950, but did the parishioners then have the wealth we are blessed with today? Despite their sacrifices, they successfully built a church that we cherish. Aren't we in a more favourable position today to continue this legacy?

In addition, we need to reflect on our responsibilities to God and express our gratitude for His countless blessings. We have received spiritual and temporal gifts from God, and it's worth pondering, "How much should I give back to God in gratitude for His many blessings?" The parable of the talents in Matthew 25: 14-30 reminds us that we are accountable for utilizing the talents and blessings God has given us.

Determining our contribution is a personal decision, not influenced by others' contributions. It requires quiet prayer and introspection to understand what we owe to God. While the concept of tithes in the Catholic Church may not directly translate to giving 10% of our income, perhaps we could consider donating an equivalent to our hourly wage each week. Let's embark on this spiritual journey of discernment together.

Next Steps

As we look beyond Easter, we are ready to begin defining our financial capacity to bring our new church project to life. This process involves a heartfelt appeal to each of you to consider your potential contributions to this noble cause. We lovingly term this appeal a "Commitment of Faith."

Promising funds for a project without a finalized design can understandably cause apprehension. However, let me reassure you that we are not asking for monetary contributions at this stage. We are seeking an indication of what you are willing to donate over specific timeframes: 1 year, 3 years, 5 years, or more.

Our shared dream of a new church and hall is not just about bricks and mortar. It's about creating a space where our community can unite, grow in faith, and continue serving others in love. This new space will be a testament to our shared history and a promise of our future together. It will be where new generations are baptized, couples are united in matrimony, and we come together to celebrate the Eucharist.

As we conclude, let's remember the strength of our community and the power of our shared faith. Let's embark on this journey together, with God's grace guiding us every step. I look forward to continuing this journey with you. Thank you for your time, your commitment, and your unwavering faith. Together, we can turn our cherished dream into a tangible symbol of our faith and community.

May God bless us all as we move forward in faith, hope, and love.

Yours in Christ,

Father Liju