

saint Laurence roman catholic church

I have been at St. Laurence Parish for seven months now. It has been a joy becoming acquainted with more parishioners as well as learning about the history, dedication and spirit of our parish. I am honored and privileged to be part of its history and to serve as your Parochial Administrator.

Since my arrival, one of the larger challenges I have encountered is the need for necessary repairs to our church. The issues at hand have been manifesting for a number of years resulting in compounded damage. These maintenance issues cannot continue to be overlooked. It has fallen upon my stewardship to address them in the interest of the upkeep and integrity of our church as well as the safety of our parishioners.

The most urgent needs upon my arrival have been to examine the church roof and ceiling. Repairs to the outside roof have already been made. Based on follow up inspections, it appears that the leaks which had been occurring for years are now fixed. However, after a careful evaluation by credible experts we have determined that there is a need to remove and replace the ceiling tiles inside the church. There is a valid concern that at some point in time some of these tiles may fall, resulting in possible injury. In addition, we had the tiles tested by environmental experts. The results of the testing confirmed that the tiles contain 5% amosite asbestos. If a tile fell and broke, the asbestos could be released into the air.

With the concurrence of engineers, environmental consultants, architects, insurance advisors, and the Archdiocese, and after consultation with the parish pastoral and finance councils, beginning immediately after Easter we will move to the lower church for all liturgical celebrations. Time is needed to prepare the usage of the lower basement church for worship. That area will require some repair work in order to make it suitable for divine worship.

St. Laurence Church has been a worshipping community for 102 years. Over the years, the faith life of its people has been fostered and nourished here by Mass, the sacraments, prayer and numerous parish celebrations. Our parish started in the Highland Park Fire Company. We then moved into the Lower church as the parish grew and eventually built the upper church. We will now return to our roots and worship together in our lower church until we can repair and reopen the upper church.

We have made these decisions with an abundance of caution and concern for your safety. Professionals estimate the cost for the entire project at approximately \$1,000,000. We are working with the Catholic Foundation of Greater Philadelphia on a fundraising feasibility study. You may be contacted for help with this study. If the project is funded, a design professional will be retained to plan the construction. If we cannot raise the necessary funds, we may not be able to keep the church open.

In order to share further details, we will host informational meetings after the 5 PM Mass next Saturday, January 25th and after the 12PM Mass on Sunday January 26th.

As loving, loyal parishioners and friends of this parish, I am asking each of you to come together with your fellow parishioners to continue to make St. Laurence Church a place of prayer and peace for many years to come. I realize that this change may be difficult and adjusting to the new space and access to it will require some sacrifices. I am confident that the spirit of our parishioners will rise above these difficulties and that we will hand on to our children a faith as strong as the one we received from our parents and grandparents. Let us all ask St. Laurence to watch over us and give us strength to come together and face these challenges and to grow together in faith as we build God's church here in Upper Darby. St. Laurence, pray for us.

Sincerely, Fr. Jeff Rott and the St. Laurence Finance and Pastoral Councils

